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## PETER THE WILD BOY OR LOST IN THE MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON

By Allan Arnold

### AND OTHER STORIES



Suddenly the Wild Boy made a rush for the chimney, tore off three or four bricks, and, running to the front of the roof, began hurling them at Theo, who dodged them as well as he could.

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# PLUCK AND LUCK

## Stories of Adventure

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# PETER, THE WILD BOY

OR,

## LOST IN THE MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON

By ALLAN ARNOLD

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE STRANGE DRIVER OF THE BLACK TOP EXPRESS.

"Are you through your work, Ham?"

"Well, I reckon I am, Theo. I don't see another thing to do. Looks fine, don't it?"

"Well, now, it does. I feel quite proud of it. And I am sure General Slocum ought to; if he don't he is hard to suit."

And Theo Kimball, the new clerk at Black Top Hall, looked around the office of the hotel admiringly, as well he might, for the arrangement of everything was certainly very neat and artistic, and it was planned in Theo's own brain, and largely executed with his own two hands, so far as decorations went, with such little help as Ham Hilt could give him, which was not much, as Ham had no more artistic taste than a cat.

It was early in the month of May, and that famous health resort, Black Top Hall, owned and conducted by General Dan Slocum, the well-known Chicago hotel man, was about to open for its third season.

Black Top Hall was located away up in the northwestern corner of Montana, in Choteau County, far up in that part of the Rockies known as the "Mountains of the Moon."

General Slocum owned all the land for miles and miles around, having purchased it from the Government in early days, at a low price, never expecting to invest half a million in a hotel in that wild region, which he subsequently did.

It was a bold venture, for Black Top Hall was over a hundred miles from Marysville, the nearest station on the Northern Pacific, but, on the other hand, the region was most picturesque, and the warm sulphur springs near the hotel were a great drawing-card for invalids, while the abundance of game in the "Mountains of the Moon" drew rich sportsmen from every large city in the land.

In the season a Concord coach ran daily to and from Marysville, by the way of Bellevue, stopping at that town over night, where General Slocum had a small, well-conducted house, run in the direct interest of the guests of Black Top Hall.

So far the investment had proved a paying one, and each season the fame of Black Top Hall had increased.

Now, another season was about to begin. Theo Kimball, a young Chicagoan, only eighteen years old, had been appointed

clerk, being acquainted with the Slocum family, and particularly friendly with Miss Sallie, the general's pretty daughter, who was one year his junior.

Hamilton Hilt, or "Ham," as he was usually called, was about Theo's age and had been assistant clerk the year before.

The boys came up to Black Top together in the latter part of March to assist in getting everything ready for the opening on May 15th, and their work was now completed.

Next day the carpenters and painters were to return to Helena and the cook, steward, two chambermaids and three waiters were expected up at any time. Applications were coming in freely, and everything pointed to an early and prosperous season, but just then the big dining-room, with its great piles of chairs and long, unset tables, looked lonely enough, while the long corridors and hundreds of vacant rooms on the floor above were so dismal that the boys slept together on a folding-bed in the office, which was the only room in which they really felt at home.

"Wonder if Jack Maynard will bring anybody up to-night?" remarked Theo, after the boys had finished their supper and sat together on the broad veranda of the hotel, which commanded a view of mountain, valley and plain covering many hundred square miles.

"Blest if I know," replied Ham. "There's any number of help due, but I don't suppose they will all come at once."

"That means that there is almost certain to be somebody. Well, we are all ready for them, and if Jack should happen to bring a guest you will have to turn cook, Ham, and I'll play headwaiter, so I guess we can get along."

"We can give them 'Ham,' anyhow," chuckled the boy.

"A sickly joke," replied Theo, "but look, there comes Jack Maynard now, don't you see?"

Far down the side of the mountain a two-seated carryall drawn by a fine pair of black horses could be seen slowly wending its way up toward Black Top Hall.

As yet it was two miles away and was visible only for a moment, but about ten minutes later it appeared again further up, and by this time Theo had brought the big double spyglass out of the office, as he was anxious to see if there were any passengers on their way to the Hall.

This carryall was not the "stage," of course. That bulky and gaily painted vehicle was quietly reposing in the big barn while its mate was down at Bellevue.



The carryall was for spring and fall use, and Jack Maynard was the regular driver, who during the winter acted as watchman at the hotel.

Jack knew the "Mountains of the Moon" as well as any one could know so extensive a range. He was a splendid hand at horses, and a most careful man, as a rule, but he had one fault—he would get drunk at times, although thus far he always managed to take care of himself and his horses.

General Slocum had often threatened to discharge him, but he had just as often forgiven the fellow, and so it happened that Jack was still running the Black Top Express, as he always styled the carryall.

"I can only see one man," said Ham, "and it don't look much like Jack, either, or is something the matter with my eyes?"

"We will soon settle that," replied Theo, adjusting his glass and looking down upon the approaching vehicle. Then he exclaimed, in language more emphatic than polite: "Well, I'll be blamed!"

"What is it?" demanded Ham.

"That's just what I want to know. Jack Maynard is not driving the express."

"Gee! Do you suppose he has gone and got full again? Have they sent some one up in his place from Bellevue?"

"Well, look and see what you think about it!" cried Theo. "It's the queerest-looking thing driving those horses that ever I saw!"

Ham took the glass, bursting out with an exclamation of surprise as soon as he had adjusted it.

"Why, it's a monkey!" he exclaimed.

"Doesn't it look so?"

"Indeed it does!"

"The fellow is naked!"

"That's what he is. Did you ever see such a head of hair in all the days of your life?"

"Never! Come on, Theo! We must find out what this means. Better get the rifle. I suppose it's an Indian. He must have killed Jack, and he may run the carryall off some other way."

Ham had good reason for his supposition, for the Blackfoot Indians, who were little better than a band of thieves, often made trouble in the early part of the season, and more than once the express had been held up and robbed.

The boys ran into the office, and each seizing their Remington they started off down the road.

As Theo calculated it, they would have a mile to go before meeting the carryall, but as it was all down hill the distance could be soon covered, so the solution of the mystery of the singular figure which held the lines was not so very far away.

As they ran on down the mountain road Ham suddenly gave a shout.

"I'll tell you what it means!" he cried. "It's Peter, the Wild Boy! By Jove! he has killed Jack Maynard and captured the Black Tom Express!"

The words were scarcely spoken when the rattle of wheels was heard right around the bend of the road.

"Coming!" cried Theo. "We had better wait and take it here."

He had not the faintest idea who Peter, the Wild Boy, might be, but there was trouble in the wind and Theo Kimball was not the sort of fellow to shirk his part on an occasion like this.

A moment more and the carryall came rattling around the bend, driven by the strangest figure that ever mortal man laid eyes on.

It was built like a man, but there the human resemblance ended, for the upper part of its naked body was covered with a thick growth of short, black hair, covering breast and arms.

A pair of snapping black eyes peered out from under a per-

fect mat of hair which hung down over the forehead and stood up straight all over the head.

As for the lower part of the body, that, with the exception of a bit of bearskin fastened about the loins, was naked, too, and the long, slim legs were covered with hair, like the arms.

Such was the strange figure which cracked the whip-lash over the horses' backs, and with a fierce yell urged the team on toward the boys.

## CHAPTER II.

### BLOWN OFF FORTY-ROD PASS.

"Peter, the Wild Boy, as sure as fate!" gasped Ham. "I hate to shoot him, but something must be done!"

But, as it proved, there was no necessity for doing any shooting. In fact, the only thing to do was to stop the horses, for the instant the strange driver caught sight of the boys he gave another yell and sprang right out of the moving vehicle, landing on his feet, like a cat.

"Stop the horses!" cried Ham.

"Hey! Hello, there! Stop, you!" shouted Theo, addressing himself to the Wild Boy, and then all in a moment he saw how useless it was.

The hairy figure made a rush for the ledge up which a goat would scarcely have attempted to climb.

It did not phase the Wild Boy a bit, as they say out West.

He went up the side of those rugged rocks like a cat, making a queer, chattering sound as he climbed.

Before Ham had seized the horses' heads he had reached the top of the ledge where he turned, looked down at the boys, grinned and showed his teeth like some huge ape.

Then he picked up a piece of rock and threw it down, after which he drew back out of sight and disappeared.

"Well!" exclaimed Theo. "If that does not beat the band. Is it a monkey, or is it a man?"

"Tell you all I know about it later," replied Ham. "Look here. Theo, these horses are all in a tremble. They are worse frightened than we are, a good sight; as for Jack, I am afraid he has been killed."

"There is somebody jammed down between the seats, here," said Theo. "Doesn't look like Jack, though."

It was not Jack. The man proved to be a stranger. He had evidently fallen off the seat and was all jammed in a heap, and the boys attempted to raise him up, supposing, of course, that he had been done up by the Wild Boy. They discovered that the man was simply in a beastly state of intoxication, with his clothes all saturated with whisky from a broken bottle that he had carried in the inside pocket of his coat.

"Who is he?" was the question the boys asked themselves, but neither could answer, as they had never seen him before. He was a large, heavy man, with a dark, sinister face. His dress was not exactly that of a gentleman, nor was it that of a workman. It was hard to make out who or what he was, and he was entirely too drunk to be able to give any help in that direction himself.

"Wonder who the deuce he can be?" exclaimed Ham. "Don't muss with him, Theo; let him stop where he is, he can't fall out the way he is wedged in between the seats."

"I suppose he must be one of the new hands at Black Top," replied Theo. "Perhaps he's the cook, they are usually pretty fond of the bottle. Jack seems to have disappeared altogether, but here's his mail-bag all right, though."



As Theo was expecting several letters, he took the mail-bag from under the front seat and opened it with a key which he carried.

There were several letters inside, and among them a telegraphic dispatch addressed to Theo himself. As he hastily read it, he exclaimed:

"Well, well! We've got to get right down to Bellevue with this team."

"No!" cried Ham. "What for?"

"Why, Miss Sallie Slocum and her friend, Mrs. Carberry, are coming up. This dispatch is from Marysville. They expect to be in Bellevue by five o'clock, and it is six now. They want me to meet them with the team."

"Gee!" cried Ham. "If that is so we haven't an instant to lose. It's a twenty-mile drive to Bellevue; why not let them stop there all night?"

"No. It can't be. General Slocum would not like it at all. Mrs. Jolland, the housekeeper, will look after everything all right till we can get back. We'll just turn the team around and start for Bellevue. I shouldn't wonder a bit if we found Jack Maynard lying drunk somewhere on the road."

"Well, it is just as you say," replied Ham. "But what are we going to do with this drunken bum?"

"Let him stop where he is, we will drop him at the Half-way House when we get to Bellevue."

It was a matter of necessity with Theo. Not for worlds would he have disregarded the telegram.

Miss Sallie Slocum had formerly been his schoolmate, and always his friend. It was through her influence that Theo was appointed clerk at Black Top Hall.

Ham raised no objections, of course. He was not in position to do so, seeing that Theo was boss, so the carryall was turned there in the narrow pass and with one parting look up at the top of the cliffs which was not rewarded by a sight of the Wild Boy, the two boys from Black Top with their drunken passenger went rattling down the mountain, the horses showing in a dozen ways how greatly relieved they were at the change in the management of the lines.

"Who is this Peter, the Wild Boy, Ham?" asked Theo, before they had proceeded far.

"Well, I don't know much about him," replied Ham, "except that the old-time prospectors and the hunters who used to lounge about the hotel last year were always talking about him. He's a wild boy—that's all."

"Is he supposed to be white?"

"Blest if I know. He looked very black and dirty to me."

"Where does he live?"

"All over the 'Mountains of the Moon,' according to the stories I have heard tell about him. He is seen here, there and everywhere, but I never heard of his doing anybody any harm."

"Then you don't believe that he has killed Jack Maynard?"

"Not at all. My idea of it is, that Jack and this gent behind us got on the booze together, coming up from the Half-way House, and most likely Jack fell out of the carryall and the horses were left to take care of themselves."

"And then the Wild Boy came along and took possession?"

"I believe that to be about the size of it. I'm looking to see Jack lying in the road anywhere. You will find I'm not mistaken, either, Theo. I know the man."

As they rode on, Theo continued to exhibit the greatest curiosity about the Wild Boy, but Ham had no further information to give him, and pretty soon they found something else to talk about, for as they drew near the famous Forty Rod Pass it began to grow dark and the oppressive atmosphere showed the boys that one of those severe thunder storms, so common in that wild region, was close at hand.

"It's going to rain," remarked Ham.

"Yes, a thunder storm," said Theo. "Rather early in the season, though."

"Oh, we got one last year just about this time. Wish to goodness we were over Forty Rod Pass, I don't like the idea of being caught there in a blow."

Theo fully agreed with this proposition. The fact was, being a newcomer in the "Mountains of the Moon," he felt pretty nervous about this same Forty Rod Pass.

And well he might, for the place was a most dangerous one. Across a long, narrow valley rose a sort of sandbar, if it can be so termed, which connected the range on one side with the range on the other.

It was over this mass of shifting sand that the road ran. Its length was just forty rods, hence the name, while its width was not over twelve feet, and the descent into the valley, on either side, was fully a hundred feet.

Fancy being caught on this dangerous bit of road in a violent thunder storm.

This, however, was precisely the fate of Theo and Ham.

The rain began to fall in big drops, as they came off the mountain trail, but as yet there was no wind, and Theo, who was driving, gave the horses the whip and started them on the pass.

"You had better blow the horn!" said Ham. "Heavens! We don't want to meet another team on the pass."

This was the custom. Whoever entered upon Forty Rod Pass was expected to blow a horn so as to warn any one coming from the opposite direction to keep off until the trail was clear.

Ham hunted under the seat for the horn, but could not find it, and Theo, impatient at the delay, drove on.

He had scarcely covered one of the forty rods, when a wild gust of wind—a perfect hurricane, in fact—came sweeping down the valley, carrying with it a shower of dust and sand blown up from the sides of the pass.

"Drive on! Drive on!" yelled Ham, as Theo, now thoroughly frightened, started to rein in.

At the same instant the blast of a horn sounded at the other end of the pass.

The boys had no means of answering, and even if they had intended to do so the driver of the coming vehicle scarcely gave them time. Through the dust cloud they could see a buggy drawn by a single horse enter upon the pass.

"Good heavens! What are we going to do now?" gasped Theo.

"Look out where you're going!" cried Ham, in terror.

At the same instant another gust of wind, fiercer than the one which had preceded it, came sweeping down the valley, carrying destruction with it.

Ham gave a yell, for the horses lost their footing and all in a moment were sliding down the precipitous sides of the sand hill, with the carryall standing almost straight up and down, resting on the forward wheels.

### CHAPTER III.

PETER, THE WILD BOY, PUTS IN AN APPEARANCE AGAIN.

"Whoa! Whoa!" yelled Ham, driven half mad with the excitement of the moment.

"Hush, you fool!" cried Theo. "Hold on for your life! Can't you see that our only salvation is to let them go!"

The words were scarcely spoken when a piercing scream rang out further along the pass.



It had lightened up a bit now and the rain was coming down in torrents.

Locking in the direction of the cry, the boys saw the buggy go tumbling down the sand hill, and they saw also that there were two women clinging desperately to the seat inside.

"Blown clean off the pass!" gasped Theo.

There was no time to say any more, for at that moment the horses struck the level and by rare good luck, helped along by the tight hold which Theo had been careful to keep on the reins, the carryall came into its usual position, with its occupants safe and sound.

"Held the horses, Ham!" shouted Theo, his voice scarcely audible above the howling of the wind. "I must see who those people are!"

The buggy had landed on its side at some distance from where the carryall had brought up, and as no one appeared above the wreck, Theo could only assume that both the occupants had been killed or at least seriously injured.

Scrambling out, he ran through the pelting rain among a group of tall pine trees, which extended on to where the valley took a sudden turn, and where the mountain rose in one vast ledge of precipitous rocks to a great height.

"I'll bet anything it is Sallie and Mrs. Carberry," muttered Theo, as he ran. "What a crazy business for them to attempt to drive on to Black Top alone, but that is precisely what they have done, and it's just like Sallie to try it, too."

He was quite correct in his conclusion. Before he had half covered the distance to the buggy he saw a very pretty young girl crawl out from under the wreck and assist a stout, middle-aged woman to rise.

"Sallie! Sallie!" shouted Theo, and he turned and called to Ham to come on with the team.

"Oh, Theo! Is it you?" cried the girl, turning as Theo came running up. "Oh, I am so thankful to see you! Oh, what shall we do with Mrs. Carberry! And the horse is killed and the buggy smashed! Oh! oh! what a dreadful thing!"

But it wasn't half as bad as Sallie Slocum made out, for strange as it may seem, neither she nor Mrs. Carberry were hurt a bit, although the latter was scared almost out of her wits.

The horse was not dead, but both legs were broken; and as for the buggy, if not "killed," as Sallie, in her excitement, declared, was entirely past its usefulness, as both shafts were broken off short.

There was a good deal of meaningless talk for the first few moments and then the ladies began to quiet down.

It appeared that Miss Sallie, finding no one at the Halfway House at Bellevue to meet her, had, in her usual impetuous fashion, started to drive to Black Top Hall herself.

She knew the road, and she felt no fear, and more than likely she would have accomplished that journey safely but for the storm.

"It's a shame!" she cried. "And all this comes from Jack Maynard getting drunk. I shall certainly have my father discharge him right away."

"I wouldn't be at all surprised if he had discharged himself and was dead," replied Theo, "but now, Sallie, you and Mrs. Carberry mustn't stand here in the rain. Get into the carryall and we will see if we can't drive out of this hole. Ham, do you know anything about the way?"

"There is a way," replied Ham. "It's up the valley and over the mountain; it brings us down a little way beyond Black Top Hall. But what's to be done with this drunken man?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Theo, "unless we take him out and put him under the buggy. He can keep dry there, and when he wakes up he will have to get out of here the best way he can."

"Dear me! Suppose he can't find his way out," suggested Mrs. Carberry.

"Well, we will send some one to hunt him up," replied Theo. "You and Sallie are of more importance to me than this drunken snoozer. Here, Ham, lend me a hand."

They disposed of the drunkard, who had never stirred through it all. And having helped Sallie and Mrs. Carberry into the carryall, they started the horses up the valley in the pouring rain.

"You are sure you know the way, Ham?" asked Sallie, who was perfectly well acquainted with the junior clerk.

"I don't know anything about it," replied Ham. "All I know is that there is a way. I suppose I can find it if I try."

"That don't sound very encouraging," said Sallie, and she was going on to say more, when a most vivid flash of lightning broke across the darkened sky.

"Goodness, me!" screamed Mrs. Carberry, whose nerves had been badly shaken. "We shall all be struck with lightning. Do get out from under these trees, Theodore! The danger is ten times greater here!"

Theo thought so himself, and urged the horses on as the thunder came crashing, the echo reverberating back among the "Mountains of the Moon."

In a few moments they passed out of the pine grove, and came upon a place where the valley narrowed with towering rocks on either side.

"How far do you suppose it is to Black Top Hall, this way, Theo?" asked Sallie.

"I can tell you nothing about it," replied Theo. "How far do you say, Ham?"

"It must be at least ten miles," answered Ham, "but look ahead there, Theo. There's a hut and a barn alongside of it. What's the matter with putting up the horses till the storm is over? It won't be dark till after eight, and we have still got lots of time."

"Oh, do! please do!" pleaded Mrs. Carberry. "It is just dreadful to ride with the rain all splashing in on one the way it is now."

Theo was willing enough, so he turned the horses in toward the hut, got down himself and helped Sallie to alight.

Ham was already at the horses' heads holding them when Theo turned to help Mrs. Carberry out, and the good woman's foot was just on the step, when all at once Sallie screamed:

"For gracious sake, Theo, look here!"

"Peter, the Wild Boy!" cried Ham.

Sallie was pointing at the flat roof of the hut, upon which the hairy, half-naked figure of the Wild Boy had suddenly appeared.

"A-yow! A-yow! A-yow!" he yelled, or something very like it. Then throwing up his shaggy head, Peter, the Wild Boy, began dancing on the low roof of the hut.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BOOM OF THE BIG BASS DRUM.

"Mercy on us! What is that?" cried good Mrs. Carberry, terribly frightened at the appearance of the strange figure dancing on the roof of the hut.

"Why, that must be Peter, the Wild Boy!" cried Sallie, who had spent the previous summer among the "Mountains of the Moon," and knew all about the sights and characters around Black Top Hall.

"That's just who it is," said Ham Hilt. "Great Scott! If I



only had a rifle how easy it would be to bring him off that roof!"

"Ham," cried Sallie, "have we a murderer among us? I'm astonished at you, Ham."

"Ham doesn't mean it," said Theo. "He is only doing a little bragging about his great shooting qualities, that's all."

"Of course, I was, not in earnest," Ham hastened to say. "I was only——"

"Don't do it again," broke in Sallie, imperiously. "Theo, my father offered a reward of a hundred dollars last season for anybody who would catch Peter, the Wild Boy, and bring him up to Black Top Hall. He thinks he would be a great drawing-card."

"Mercy on us, Sallie!" screamed Mrs. Carberry. "Would you have Theo bring that creature into the carryall with us? You needn't expect me to stay here if you do. I would rather get out and walk to Black Top Hall on foot, rain or no rain!"

"Hold the horses, Ham," said Theo. "I'll see what I can do; anything that Sallie says goes."

Ham took the lines, and Theo jumped out of the carryall and started for the hut.

Meanwhile, the Wild Boy had kept right on dancing upon the flat roof of the hut.

It was wonderful to watch him there, with the rain pouring down upon him and the lightning playing about his head, while the crashing peals of thunder made the scene more weird still.

He sprang five feet high into the air at least, kicking out his legs, throwing up his arms, snapping his fingers and gesticulating wildly, all the while shaking his great shaggy head from side to side.

He paid no attention at all to the team, nor to Theo as he walked slowly toward the hut.

All at once he changed his tactics and began spinning round and round, his long hair, wet with the rain, standing straight out as he whirled, and through it all he kept up a series of diabolical yells awful to listen to. It was no wonder that good Mrs. Carberry was afraid.

"Hello, up there!" cried Theo, pausing as he drew near the hut. "Hello! Don't be afraid of me. I won't hurt you. Come to the front of the roof. I want to speak to you a moment."

The Wild Boy stopped whirling and seemed to listen.

He grinned at Theo, showing his teeth, like an ape, and indeed he looked when much more like a monkey than a man.

Suddenly he made a rush for the chimney, tore off three or four bricks, and running to the front of the roof, began hurling them at Theo, who dodged them as well as he could.

At the same instant a flash of lightning illuminated the whole heavens, followed immediately by an awful crash of thunder and wild screams from the two ladies.

The great tree under which the carryall stood was shivered to atoms, the lightning playing down its trunk wildly, and the two horses reared and plunged so violently that it was all Ham could do to hold them in.

"Theo! Theo! Come away! Come away quick!" screamed Sallie, for the bricks continued to fly through it all.

Theo ran to the carryall, afraid for the horses.

"There he goes! There he goes!" shouted Ham, and they all saw the Wild Boy run back on the roof, which touched the towering cliffs, and then up he went over the rocks, like a goat, springing up perpendicular heights, leaping from crag to crag, until at last he disappeared.

"Mercy!" screamed Mrs. Carberry. "Let's go on! Anything but to stay here!"

"We can't go on till the storm lets up," replied Theo, who was at the horses' heads now, and had succeeded in quieting

them. "Sallie, I think we had better take the horses out and go into the hut. We can put the team into the barn here."

"Anything you say, Theo," replied Sallie, quietly. "Now, Mrs. Carberry, you keep quiet. We are in trouble and it don't make it a bit better for you to keep screaming the way you do."

But Mrs. Carberry was not through screaming yet.

The next yell she gave was a tremendous one, and she certainly will have to be excused, for all in the same instant the big tree shivered by the lightning came crashing to the ground.

Then Theo had another racket with the horses.

It was all he could do to hold them, and perhaps he would not have been able to do it at all if they had not backed the carryall into the hut.

"You had better get out, Sallie!" he exclaimed. "And you, too, Mrs. Carberry. I'll unharness. It won't be safe to try to go any further until this storm has stopped."

Mrs. Carberry was willing enough now, and Theo helped her out of the carryall. Sallie jumped out herself and Ham followed.

"I'll go into the hut first," said Theo. "Don't you go, Sallie. There is no telling what we may strike in there. Look after the horses, Ham."

"That's all right," said Ham. "Don't you worry about the horses, so long as you keep the ladies."

Theo flung open the door and walked boldly into the hut.

One glance told them that they had the place all to themselves, for it consisted only of one room, and that a small one; there was not even a loft above.

On one side was a big open fireplace of stone with a lot of brushwood piled up near it, which suggested a good chance to dry wet clothes.

"This is all right!" exclaimed Theo. "Three chairs, a table, some wood for the fire and, hello! a lantern, too! We shall be comfortable enough here. Sit down, ladies. I'll just run out and see that Ham is getting along with the horses all right."

But Sallie Slocum was not one of the kind to sit down when there was anything to do. When Theo returned, and this was after he and Ham had put the horses in the old barn alongside the hut, Sallie had the fire crackling on the hearth.

"This is comfortable, Theo," she said. "We could stay here all night, if necessary, but I don't think we will have to; the storm seems to be dying away."

"It is almost over," replied Theo. "I expect to see the stars out inside of ten minutes. Now, then, ladies, do sit down and draw up to the fire and try to dry your clothes a bit. Sallie, you know all about this place, and you seem to know all about Peter, the Wild Boy. Tell me who people say he is. Did you ever see him before?"

"Yes, once before," replied Sallie. "Father and I were riding away up in the mountains with some of the guests at Black Top Hall, when he suddenly ran across the road in front of us and went up the rocks just as you saw him do to-night, but as to who he is I'm sure I can't give you any information. I have asked the same question a dozen times myself, but I could never get any answer that satisfied me."

"But what do people say about him?" persisted Theo. "Is he supposed to be a human being, or not?"

"Father says he is. I have heard some of the old prospectors say he wasn't."

"What is your father's theory about him?"

"Why, you know, Theo, or perhaps you don't know, for you have hardly been here long enough to hear all the yarns that are floating about the 'Mountains of the Moon,' that years and years ago there was a big gold excitement up here. At that time there was a gold mine opened in these mountains by a man named Dade Fuller. It was said to be enormously rich,



and this man Fuller used to come down out of the mountains with great bags of gold, as heavy as he could carry. He would not tell generally where he got it, but he kept right on working, and took a good many men into his secret, and they carted mining machinery up into the mountains, and father says a great deal of work must have been done on the mine, and a lot of money spent. So it went on for two years. Anybody who attempted to hunt up the mine was met somewhere on the road and warned off by armed men.

"Several people were shot, and there was a great deal of excitement about it until at last one day there came a terrific storm, which lasted for a week, and from that day forward nothing was ever heard of Dade Fuller or his miners. Weeks and months passed, and they did not appear. Men went up in the mountains and searched everywhere, but they never succeeded in finding the mine or getting any clew to the lost miners, and the theory was that they must have all perished in a landslide brought on by the storm."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. Carberry.

"Quite a story," said Theo. "How long ago was this, Sallie?"

"About fifteen years ago."

"And what has all this to do with Peter, the Wild Boy?"

Sallie laughed and declared that she had left out the point of her story, adding:

"Father thinks that this wild boy must have been taken into the mountains by one of the miners as a little child, and that out of all that perished he alone was saved and has grown up in the mountains as wild as the beasts around him. But, of course, this is only a theory, Theo. I wouldn't have you think that——"

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Suddenly a strange sound was heard under their feet.

It was unmistakable.

Some one was beating a big bass-drum.

It kept right on while they listened.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SKELETON IN THE ROAD.

"Mercy on us! What is that!" cried Mrs. Carberry, giving vent to her favorite expression once again.

"Sounds mighty like a drum," said Ham Hilt. "Theo, don't it strike you so?"

"It isn't anything else," said Theo. "But where does it come from? That's what is bothering me."

"Down the cellar!" declared Sallie. "It is right under the house here."

"Then, by thunder, we will find out who is doing the drumming," said Theo. "I suppose it is more of Peter, the Wild Boy's, work."

Perhaps it was, but if so Theo could not make it out.

Trouble was he could not find the cellar. He and Ham hunted all over the floor inside the hut, and did the same to the walls outside, but no trace of any cellar entrance could they discover, and yet all the time the drumming kept right up.

It made Mrs. Carberry terribly nervous. She began to talk about haunted houses, and at last she declared that she had rather stand outside in the rain than to remain in the hut another moment, and it must be owned that Sallie and the two boys began to feel about the same way.

They did not have to stand out in the rain, however, for the storm had now passed away, and the stars were shining brightly.

Sallie declared that they ought to harness the horses and get on the move again.

"Do you really think we shall be able to drive to the hotel this way?" asked Theo. "Remember, I know nothing of the road."

"Oh, I think we can," replied Sallie. "This trail must lead somewhere. If we can't get to Black Top, why, at least, we can turn back. I'd rather drive all night than remain in this horrible hut."

So the boys harnessed up the horses and made ready to start again.

All the time they were at work the drumming continued.

Sometimes it would stop for a minute or two, but would begin again.

The drum, if indeed it was a drum, was still booming when they rode away.

"It's the most amazing thing I ever heard of," declared Mrs. Carberry. "Theo, what do you suppose it really is?"

"I'm sure I can't tell you," replied Theo, "but I don't believe it's a drum."

"What then?" asked Sallie.

"Why, perhaps the air rushing through some cave under the hut."

"Nonsense!" laughed Sallie. "Why didn't we hear it when we first went into the hut?"

"Now you ask me too much, but who would have a bass-drum up here in the 'Mountains of the Moon?'"

"Yes, and supposing some one actually did have one," said Ham, "how would that some one beat the drum in the cellar when there isn't any cellar? That's what I want to know."

"Now, that's enough!" cried Sallie. "Not another word about the drum. Drive right on, Theo. We will follow this road to the end, anyhow, and then we will decide what to do next."

How could Theo refuse, since horses and carryall belonged to Sallie's father, in whose employ he was?

Besides that, he did not fully realize the risk he was taking.

Old prospectors would have told him that it was a terrible one, and that it was no joke to be lost in the "Mountains of the Moon."

The trail which they were following—it could scarcely be called a road—was certainly distinct enough, although it evidently was a long time since it had been used.

Deep ruts showed that heavily laden wagons had gone over it at some time or another, but where it began Theo had no very distinct idea.

Certainly they had not seen anything of it when they first left Forty Rod Pass, for then the carryall simply passed over the sand.

For about two miles their way led through the valley, which was long and narrow, and bordered by precipitous cliffs on either side.

Then it began to ascend through a wild pass.

The cliffs came closer together and the trail grew so stony that all marks of the wagon-wheels were obliterated. It was all the horses could do to pull the carryall up. This they followed for about two miles. It wound in and out among the mountains. Theo lost all idea of direction and could not tell at all which way he was going. It seemed to him mere madness to keep on much further, but every time he threw out a hint to that effect, Sallie would exclaim:

"Go on! Go on! I'll tell you when to stop."

"It will be fun coming down here if we have to turn back," declared Ham.

"It will be just perfectly dreadful. We can never do it," said



Mrs. Carberry. "Sallie, you must give up. We ought to turn back right now."

"Will you please to inform me how we are going to do it?" asked Sallie. "Theo, can you turn the carryall here in this pass?"

"Indeed I can't," replied Theo, "but I do think we might manage to drive down."

"Of course we can," said Sallie, scornfully. "I've driven over worse places than this many a time. If you can't drive down when the time comes, Theo, why, you will be asked to turn the lines over to me—that's all."

"I don't give up the lines when I'm driving," said Theo, grimly.

"Not to a girl, anyhow," retorted Sallie, with one of her rippling laughs.

"Bless my heart, what's that ahead in the road!" cried Mrs. Carberry, who was peering out nervously all the while.

It was something white and shining in the moonlight, and lay stretched across the road at no great distance ahead.

The horses saw it and began to get nervous, especially the off-horse, who reared up and threw himself back.

"We must find out what that thing is before we go any further!" cried Theo, reining in.

"I'll get out," said Ham. "You stick to the horses, Theo, you are a better driver than I am any day in the week."

Ham ran ahead, but as he drew near the white object he suddenly stopped.

"What do you suppose it is?" he called back.

"It looks from here like a human skeleton," replied Theo, whose eyes were as sharp as needles.

Mrs. Carberry gave a scream when Ham sung out:

"Well, that's just what it is. It's a skeleton lying right across the road!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE STRANGE ADVENTURE ON THE RIDGE.

"Horrors!" cried Mrs. Carberry. "What are we going to do?"

"Drive on," replied Sallie, emphatically. "Ham, are you afraid to handle that thing? If you are I will get out and do it for you. Theo don't leave these horses with my consent."

"Of course I'm not afraid," growled Ham, in a voice so shaky that it told Theo exactly contrary to what he said.

"Catch hold, Ham. A lot of dry bones won't hurt you!" he called out.

"I can't do it," he called. "Hello, here's something under the thing."

"What is it?" asked Theo.

"Seems to be a little book done up in oil silk."

"Probably it was in the pocket of the dead man before his clothes rotted away," said Theo, and he added:

"Sallie, this goes to show that it is many years since this road has been traveled."

"There isn't any doubt about that," replied Sallie, "and I knew it before. Ham, kick those bones out of the way. It is a terrible strain on the horses for them to hold the carryall so. What's up now? Have you found something more?"

"There's a lot of yellow lumps here. I think they must be gold," replied Ham, "and there's a rusty knife and a bunch of keys. I don't see anything else."

Ham then kicked the bones to one side and, getting back into the carryall, Theo started ahead.

"Yes, there is a book wrapped up in this oil silk," said

Sallie, who had taken it from Ham, "but it is so dark that I can't make much out of it. Seems to be in manuscript, though."

"We will look it over to-morrow," said Theo. "We are coming out of this, I can see that it is getting lighter ahead. Say, Ham, that stuff is gold fast enough."

The horses toiled on up the slope and, sure enough, after another turn came to the end of the pass.

Suddenly they emerged upon a broad ridge of solid rock which ran directly across the line of the pass, and seemed to extend for a long distance right and left.

It was fully fifty feet wide, and on either side vast precipices descended abruptly.

The view was something superb. Sallie and Mrs. Carberry both broke out into exclamations of rapture, for they could look for miles and miles in all directions, and the whole landscape, bathed as it was in soft moonlight, formed a study for an artist of the finest kind.

"Why, it is worth all we have been through to see this," exclaimed Sallie. "I shall certainly come here again. Now, Theo, which way do we go? To the right or left?"

"To the right, of course," replied Theo, "that is, if we want to fetch up at Black Top Hall."

"Which we most certainly do. Drive on."

The ridge was as smooth as a floor, but rather slippery under the horses' feet. It was all Theo could do to hold them in, and they were getting along famously when all at once Ham called out that he could see buildings ahead.

It was certainly so. There in the distance rose several frame structures of considerable size, which seemed to stand directly across their path.

As they drew nearer Mrs. Carberry suddenly gave a scream, for the strange figure of Peter, the Wild Boy, sprang up from the rocks and turned and faced them, leaping up and down, waving his arms, kicking his legs and shaking his shaggy head, making the still night air fairly ring with his wild cries.

"Bless the creature! What is he at now?" cried the good woman. "Don't drive into him, Theo!"

"Let him get out of the way, then!" cried Theo. "I'm going straight on."

As he touched up the horses the Wild Boy turned and ran like a deer toward the group of buildings.

In a moment he had reached them and popped in through the door of the largest and disappeared.

"We'll get him yet," said Theo, grimly.

"Let us stop and try for it," replied Sallie.

"Well, we have got to stop, I'm thinking," said Theo. "If I know anything we have come to the end of our rope."

"Why, what's this!" exclaimed Ham. "I didn't notice it before. These buildings reach from one side of the ridge to the other. How are we going to get by?"

"We can't get by, that's what," replied Theo, "and you will find that the ridge don't go any further if I know anything at all."

"I declare! I believe that's just what it all means!" exclaimed Sallie. "What place can this be?"

They were up to the door of the largest house, but all was dark and silent.

The buildings were in good repair, but wore a deserted look.

The largest of the three seemed to be intended for a dwelling-house. The one on the left was closed up and had but one window, which gave it the appearance of a storehouse, for a heavy wooden shutter concealed the glass, if there was any.

The one on the other side was a high, open shed, quite large enough to drive into, and as these three extended from one side of the ridge to the other, there was not an inch of spare room either way.



"We may as well drive the horses into that shed and get out," said Theo. "Don't you say so, Sallie?"

"Certainly," replied Sallie. "We don't leave here without exploring everything thoroughly. I have my own ideas about this place."

"You are thinking of the lost mine," said Theo, touching up the horses.

They entered the shed and stopped.

"I'll get out first," said Ham, and he had just started to do so when Mrs. Carberry gave another scream.

"Mercy on us! We are sinking down!" the good woman cried.

It was the floor.

The instant the team stopped it began to move slowly downward.

"Jump out!" screamed Sallie.

"Hold on!" said Theo, calmly. "We are down too far, already. It is too late!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### STRANGE DISCOVERIES AT THE DESERTED MINE.

The sinking floor went down as quietly as you please, passing through an open shaft.

On one side there were rocks, on the other three the boys and their passengers could look off upon a deep valley.

It was exactly as Theo had said. The ridge came to an end here and the buildings which they were now leaving above them were built directly across its terminus.

And now our party found themselves sinking down so easily and so quietly that even the horses were not disturbed.

"A regular team elevator!" exclaimed Ham, who had seen similar arrangements among the mines in the Black Hills, where he was once employed.

"That's certainly what it is," echoed Theo. "Sallie, I think we have discovered Dade Fuller's lost mine, all right!"

Sallie thought so, too. She was pretty well excited and so was Mrs. Carberry, it is needless to say.

Although the elevator went down with scarce a jar, the whole thing jarred Mrs. Carberry tremendously, and she livened up the journey down into the unknown lower regions by a succession of shrill screams and such exclamations as: "Mercy on us! Bless my soul, what next! Why don't somebody pull the rope and stop this thing!"

"Mrs. Carberry, will you keep quiet?" cried Sallie. "We can't stop it. We don't know how. There is no rope to pull. Do, for gracious sake, hold your tongue!"

"We are most down," said Ham, at last.

"Probably we shall run into a shaft at the end and it will be dark," added Theo. "Now, don't be scared, Mrs. Carberry, it won't do us any harm."

Theo had scarcely spoken when they did run into something which shut off the moonlight.

It was only for a moment, however. Then they came into a shed similar to the one they had driven into above. The door stood open and as there was nothing to hinder, Theo drove the horses out and drew up before a large frame building, one of several, which stood on the bank of a rushing stream.

They were now in a long, narrow valley, far up in the "Mountains of the Moon."

If any one had told Theo then that they were helplessly lost in those same mountains he would have laughed at the suggestion, but—never mind now, however, we shall come to all this in due time.

"More of the lost mine property!" exclaimed Theo. "Sallie, this place is deserted. We won't find anybody here."

"Nobody but Peter, the Wild Boy," replied Sallie. "Don't you doubt that he will turn up all right."

"I don't doubt it," said Theo. "I fully expect to see him. We may as well get out and wait for daylight here. I don't see a bit of use in trying to drive any further to-night."

"How about going back up on the ridge?" asked Ham. "If this thing will work one way, of course it will work the other."

"We will look into it in the morning," replied Theo. "I think we shall be able to work it up all right. I expect it is a hydraulic affair, controlled by that stream. Of course, it was intended to take those big wagons up and down."

There were three big wagons standing around. One was loaded down with lumps of yellowish-white rock, which Ham declared was gold ore.

After some further talk, Ham started in to unharness the horses, while Theo led the ladies over to the big house and tried the door.

It opened at his touch, and a damp, musty odor came rushing out.

"Dear me! What a dreadful smell!" cried Mrs. Carberry. "If you have any matches, Theo, do light them. I should want to see what there is inside here before I go in."

"Patience! Patience!" said Sallie. "We are going to take everything just as it comes, to-night. There you go, Theo! Now we can see. Well, this is a good, comfortable room."

"Here's a lamp," said Theo, going in, and in a moment he had all the light they needed from a hanging-lamp which hung over a long, wooden table.

This showed them a sizable room, with the table in the middle and a dozen chairs in each side. The table was spread for a meal. And the dishes contained dried-up remains of what had once been meat, perhaps, and bread, but was now nothing but dust.

"One thing certain, it's years since this place was occupied," said Theo. "Here, I'll build up a fire and get some of this dampness out of the place."

There was plenty of dry wood near the fireplace, as had been the case in the hut, and Theo soon had a good fire crackling on the hearth. Sallie and Mrs. Carberry drew up chairs and were just setting themselves down to be comfortable, when Ham looked in through the open door.

"Say, Theo, I want to see you a moment outside in the barn," he said, quietly.

"What's the matter?" demanded Sallie. "Don't keep anything back from us now, Ham. We want to know all that's going on."

Ham made no answer and Theo went right out. Sallie immediately followed him and Mrs. Carberry, declaring that she would not remain alone, went too.

"Well, if you ladies will come, I suppose you have all got to see it," growled Ham. "It won't bite you, anyway. We can't put the horses in that barn."

"Why not?" demanded Theo, going toward the open doors.

"More of them bones, that's all. Horses' bones, this time, and men's, to! Blamed if I understand it all. Looks as though everything and everybody had been -truck down dead."

Now, this was the beginning of a series of strange discoveries which may as well be described in detail in order that the true situation may be fully understood.

Ham had found a stable lantern and lighted it, and when Theo went into the barn he saw in each of the six stalls a mass of horses' bones.

Evidently the horses had died suddenly, for with the neck bones of each was a halter and each halter was hitched to the manger.

There was no evidence that any horse had tried to pull out



of the stall. It seemed as if each one had dropped dead just where he stood.

In one corner of the barn lay a skeleton of a dog with a chain among the neck bones, attached to a collar.

Near the dog lay a human skeleton, and in one of the stalls was another.

This last skeleton was in a sitting posture, as though the dead man had sunk down beside the horse, and close beside it lay a currycomb and a horse-brush.

"You see," said Ham, pointing to them, "that fellow dropped dead. So did the horses and so did the dog. Now, what struck them? That's what I want to know."

"It is dreadful!" cried Sallie, at the doorway. "Don't come in, Mrs. Carberry, and don't stand there screaming. We will go back to the house."

But Theo stopped them.

"Wait," he said, "something seems to tell me that we haven't seen the end of this. Let me go ahead with Ham. We have only begun our discoveries."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### WHAT KILLED ALL THESE MEN?

It was decided that Mrs. Carberry should remain sitting on the doorstep, while Theo, Ham and Sallie explored the barn thoroughly.

Before they started on this, however, the bones were cleaned out of two of the stalls and the horses put up.

There was plenty of hay in the loft and a good supply of oats in a feed-box downstairs, so the horses were left in comfortable shape, when Theo took the lantern and led the way back to the house.

The result of the exploring tour was altogether amazing.

Twenty human skeletons were found in that house and in each case there was every evidence that the unfortunate had died a sudden death.

In the kitchen a skeleton lay in front of a big range. This seemed to be the cook, and from the pots and pans on the range and the table, it looked as though the man had died in the act of serving a meal.

In the room adjoining the one where Theo had built the fire, which opened outside by a side door, fifteen skeletons were found.

They were lying around in all sorts of positions, but all in a line, as it were, and Theo jumped at the conclusion that they had all jumped up from the table and made a rush for the door when all were stricken down.

If this was true, none had succeeded in reaching the door, for the nearest one lay three feet away from it.

Besides these, two were found in beds on the floor above, where there were a dozen small but comfortably furnished rooms.

In a sort of washroom downstairs another was found, and there was one in a shed behind the house; one close to the rear door and one at the head of the stairs which led to the floor above.

In short, it was a perfect charnel house. No one, to look at the skeletons as they lay, could question that death had come suddenly to all.

As for the rest, the party made a finish of their exploring tour.

There was a storehouse well filled with provisions and various kinds of mining tools and miners' goods; an ore-house

packed with the same yellowish-white rock found in the wagons, a shaft-house above a well-constructed mining shaft, and an engine-house, with a skeleton lying on the floor, and a few other buildings of minor importance.

Over the shaft-house was a rudely painted sign bearing the name "Dade Fuller."

This, of course, settled the identity of the place. It was the lost mine of the "Mountains of the Moon."

At last the whole party went back into the big dining-room and sat down by the fire to discuss the situation.

"No sleep to-night," said Sallie. "We shall have to keep each other awake telling stories and just as soon as it gets light we will start."

"What about music, Sallie?" suggested Theo. "You used to play the banjo better than any professional I ever knew, and as to singing, well, if I had as good a tenor voice as you have soprano, I should not be a hotel clerk very long. I should go on the stage."

"Oh, you flatterer!" laughed Sallie. "You are the same old sixpence, Theo, but I can't play the banjo without a banjo, and as for singing, I do need an accompaniment to exhibit my powers to such a high-toned audience as this."

"Just so! Well, I can supply the banjo, all right," said Theo. "Don't you worry about that."

"How? My banjo is in my trunk and I left that at Bellevue."

"There's a splendid banjo in one of the rooms upstairs. I saw it hanging against the wall."

Sallie shuddered.

"Oh! I couldn't, Theo! I really couldn't touch the thing," she cried.

"Dreadful!" echoed Mrs. Carberry. "It makes my flesh crawl to think of it. Theo, what do you suppose killed those men? Now, give me your idea."

"Now, now, Mrs. Carberry, stop!" cried Sallie. "That makes the twentieth time you have asked the same question. I say, whoever speaks about the dead men again must go into the next room and spend the balance of the night with the skeletons."

This settled Mrs. Carberry.

Sallie then announced that she would try the banjo, and Theo went upstairs and brought it down.

It was really a splendid instrument, but needed cleaning sadly. As soon as Sallie tried to tune it the strings snapped.

"That settles it!" she exclaimed. "I might have known

"It doesn't settle it at all," laughed Theo. "Here you are, a box of strings found in the top drawer of the bureau of the same room."

Sallie strung up the banjo afresh and ran her fingers over the strings.

"These are all right!" she declared. "Now, then, boys, what shall it be?"

"Give us a coon song," said Ham.

"'New Coon Came to Town,'" added Theo, and Sallie started in and sang the first verse in a voice which many a prima donna might have envied, accompanying herself with no little skill.

The boys joined in the chorus and then Sallie started in on the second verse.

She had scarcely got well going when Mrs. Carberry burst out with a shrill scream.

Boom! Boom! Boom—boom! Boom!

There, under their feet, was the big bass-drum again banging away.

Sallie dropped the banjo on the table and sprang to her feet.

"This is too much!" she cried. "Is that drum going to follow us forever? Theo, what can it mean?"



"Mercy on us!" screamed Mrs. Carberry. "Just listen to that!"

It was more than the drum now. The booming kept right up, but other sounds were mingled with it.

Cymbals began crashing and some kind of wind instrument was blown, all in horrible discord.

"Let me out! Let me out!" screamed Mrs. Carberry, rushing to the door, her voice half drowned with the crashing cymbals and the boom of the big bass-drum.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CAPTURED BY THE WILD BOY.

"I'll know what that means if it takes the balance of the night!" cried Theo, and at it he went, assisted by Ham.

Mrs. Carberry and Sallie went outside, while the boys tried in every way in their power to find an entrance to the supposed cellar under the house.

It was just the same as at the hut. If there was a cellar it could not be discovered.

The racket kept up about twenty minutes and then stopped short and was not heard again.

After a while all returned to the room, but there was no further attempt at banjo playing or singing.

For an hour they sat talking and by that time Mrs. Carberry was asleep with her head down on the table and Sallie flung herself down upon a lounge and went to sleep, too, and the next thing Theo knew, Ham was snoring away in his chair.

This was just the chance Theo wanted.

He got up out of his own chair, took the banjo and quietly left the house.

"There is no harm in trying the experiment," he muttered. "I believe Peter, the Wild Boy, is responsible for all that racket. Now let's see if he will follow me. Perhaps I can catch him. If my chance comes, you bet I am going to try."

Theo had been studying on the problem and had formed his own ideas about it all.

He was not a bad banjoist himself, and when he reached the shaft-house he went in, hung the lantern on a hook and, taking up his position near the open mouth of the shaft, began to play.

He had not been at it more than five minutes before the fun began.

It was the same old drum; the cymbals and pipes were missing this time.

Theo let it boom away and played right on.

Louder and louder the drum was beaten and Theo, not to be outdone, played louder still, until all at once the sound ceased and the rope which hung down into the shaft and which was supposed to be connected with the bucket or cage, or whatever arrangement there was here for hoisting ore, was violently shaken.

"There is some one down there," thought Theo. "I knew it. Probably there is a drift running out of that shaft and I'd like to bet that it runs right under the house. If it's the Wild Boy and he gives me half a chance, he is my game."

There was some one climbing up by the rope—that was certain. Instead of looking down into the shaft as another might have done, Theo stepped inside of a little room which appeared to have been used as the office of the mine, keeping the banjo going all the while.

He left the door slightly open and stood a little behind it and after a moment he was rewarded for his pains.

Suddenly a head of tangled hair appeared above the edge of the shaft and then, with a quick spring, the Wild Boy leaped upon the desk.

He stood listening to the music for a moment and staring at the lantern. His eyes were blazing with excitement and every muscle of his naked body was twitching from head to foot.

Still Theo kept on playing, feeling that his chance had not yet come.

All at once the Wild Boy began to dance in the same mad way that he had done on the roof of the hut.

He threw out his legs and arms and sprang around like an animal, his eyes flashing and his teeth grinding together, making a strange, chattering noise all the while like a big ape.

It took all the courage Theo possessed to keep on playing now.

The muscles of the Wild Boy's arms looked as strong as iron.

"I wonder if I am good for him?" thought Theo, and the thought had no more than crossed his mind than he had a chance to find out, for the Wild Boy sprang in through the door.

Theo dropped the banjo and grabbed him.

It was desperate business and a fearful struggle followed, the strange creature screaming shrilly all the while.

Theo got one arm about his neck and the other around his waist and tried to throw him. He was something of an expert at wrestling, while with his hairy antagonist it was all brute strength, of course.

At it they went for all they were worth. The strength displayed by the Wild Boy was tremendous, but all the skill was on Theo's side, and he managed to retain his hold.

Once he had him almost down, then he threw him over into a corner and tried to pin him against the wall.

He failed there, however. The Wild Boy pushed and sent Theo flying back against the wall on the other side of the little office, but all this time Theo was pressing his throat tighter, and suddenly relief came.

The boy gasped, choked and sank to the floor.

"I've got him!" thought Theo, and he let go his hold.

It was a fatal mistake.

Perhaps the Wild Boy had somewhat lost his wind, or perhaps it was only a ruse, but, at all events, he was up again like a flash and this time he caught Theo unprepared.

Throwing his long arms about him, the Wild Boy lifted Theo right off his feet and, hugging him bear fashion, started on the run out of the shaft-house.

It was of no use to try to pull away. The strength of the Wild Boy seemed to lie in his arms and Theo could not free himself.

The boy made for the rocks opposite the shaft-house and without any apparent effort ran up a steep ascent to a narrow ledge some twenty feet above the level of the valley.

It was Theo's turn to do some shouting then.

"Ham! Ham!" he yelled, and, sure enough, managed to make himself heard.

Ham had just waked up when the cry came.

He rushed out of the house just in time to see Peter, the Wild Boy, with Theo in his arms, running along the narrow ledge.

Suddenly he paused, and, to Ham's horror, raised Theo up as though to throw him down upon the rocks below.

## CHAPTER X.

### RETREAT CUT OFF.

Ham Hilt was scared almost out of his wits. He did not dare to call out, though, for fear that it would only excite the Wild Boy still more and make Theo's doom a certainty.



With open mouth and staring eyes, he stood looking up at the rocks, and then, to his unspeakable relief, he saw the Wild Boy put Theo down upon the ledge and go scrambling up the cliff in the same old style.

It was a place which would have been difficult for a goat to climb, but Peter did it easily, and in a moment had disappeared among the ragged rocks, far up the cliff.

Ham did not lose a moment, but made one rush for the cliffs and started to climb upon the ledge, where, to his immense relief he met Theo coming down.

"Oh! Are you alive?" Ham blurted out.

"Well, I'm alive and that's about all!" panted Theo. "By thunder, Ham, you don't catch me tackling Peter, the Wild Boy, again. Did you see?"

"I saw him holding you up over those rocks. Theo, I was that scared that I——"

"Scared! How would you have liked to be in my place? That fellow has got the strength of a lion in his arms. Never saw anything like it. I thought I was some on wrestling, but I could no more throw him than I could fly."

Of course, Ham wanted to know all about it, so Theo told the whole story.

There was no thought of sleeping after that.

The boys sat on the doorstep of the house and talked until daylight, neither Sallie Slocum nor Mrs. Carberry waking up until the sun was half an hour high, and then, of course, Theo had the whole story to tell over again.

"We must get right out of here," declared Sallie. "We mustn't take any more chances. I should be frightened to death if that terrible fellow was to attack us. You and Ham can come down with a party and explore all these mysteries, later on, Theo, but we ladies want to get right up to the hotel."

Theo gave Ham a meaning look.

"How do you propose to get there, Sallie?" he asked.

"Back by the way we came," replied Sallie, promptly. "We can leave the horses at the hut and send somebody that knows the country after them. We can climb up the bank easily enough, I dare say, and so walk to Black Top. It is no use to try to drive there. We shall only get into worse trouble than we are in now."

"I'm afraid it won't work, Sallie," replied Theo, gloomily. "Ham and I have been trying to find out how that elevator is raised, and I am sorry to be obliged to inform you that we can't discover any way."

"Mercy on us!" screamed Mrs. Carberry, "do you mean to say we have got to stay forever in this dreadful place?"

"I mean to say that neither Ham nor I can get the elevator up," replied Theo. "We have been working over the problem ever since the first ray of daylight came, and we just can't find out how it is done."

Here was uncomfortable news.

The enterprising Sallie would not accept the situation at all, but declared herself as good a mechanic as any man living.

"If you can't find out how to work the machine, Theo Kimball, I can," she said, emphatically, but she failed just the same, and after half an hour's work had to give it up.

The elevator just wouldn't move, and none of the party could discover any means of making it.

"Harness the horses!" exclaimed Sallie, at last. "Let's drive up to the end of the valley. No doubt we shall find a way out there."

Theo suggested breakfast first, and as there was plenty of provisions in the storehouse, and there was really no special haste, Sallie yielded.

The boys went into the kitchen and after removing the

skeletons, built up a big fire in the range, and Mrs. Carberry, with Sallie's help, cooked up a really comfortable meal.

Of course, the one subject of conversation was Peter, the Wild Boy, and the mysterious music of the night before, and the mystery of the skeletons came in for its share of discussion, too.

Breakfast finished, the horses were harnessed and the journey up the valley began.

For over eight miles, Theo drove on over the level, stony ground, where there was not even the sign of a road, but no change in the situation came.

They were hemmed in between two towering walls of rock entirely inaccessible to anybody, unless it was Peter, the Wild Boy, and still the valley kept winding on until all at once a sudden turn brought them directly up against a cross-wall of rock, several hundred feet high, through which there was no break.

"Good gracious!" cried Mrs. Carberry. "What are we going to do now!"

"Go back," replied Sallie. "Theo, we are in a bad fix."

"We are lost in the 'Mountains of the Moon,' that's all," replied Theo. "It's a pretty serious matter, Sallie. Upon my word, I don't just know what we are going to do."

"Say," broke in Ham, "there must be some way in and out of here. Whoever built that elevator had to get down into the valley first."

"Good for you, Ham!" cried Theo. "There is sound reasoning there. I have another idea."

"What?"

"The mine. Peter, the Wild Boy, came out of it. He probably came through some drift. How can we tell where it leads to. Like enough, out into the next valley. That thought gives us another string to our bow."

"And besides that, there is no use in despairing," said Sallie, cheerfully. "Brace up, Mrs. Carberry, and don't look so doleful. Turn the horses around, Theo, and we will get back to the mine."

"Sallie, you're a brick," laughed Theo. "If we had more girls like you on our hands they would make things good and hot for us. Don't you fret, we will work out of this some old way."

"Let's try a little music," said Sallie. "I'm going to sing."

She started up a well-known air, and the boys joined in the chorus.

One would have supposed that it was some pleasure party out for a picnic, instead of four unfortunates, lost in the "Mountains of the Moon."

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE POISON GEYSER.

Theo had driven back about two-thirds of the way to the mine, when the whole party was suddenly startled by a loud explosion, which stirred up the horses so that he could hardly hold them in.

"Mercy on us! What now?" screamed Mrs. Carberry. "Are we being fired at? Was it a cannon? Is it Indians? Oh, my gracious! what shall we do?"

"Oh, be quiet!" said Sallie, "and don't talk nonsense. Do Indians go around with cannons shooting at people? How absurd."

"I am just about as much puzzled to know what it can be as Mrs. Carberry," said Theo. "It didn't sound like a blast, but more like gas."



"Now don't tell me that we are going to find a gas-works here," exclaimed Mrs. Carberry. "What next?"

"There it is!" cried Ham, as the carryall swept around a bend of the valley.

Right ahead an immense jet of water was seen shooting skyward.

It rose to the height of nearly a hundred feet, and turning gracefully, and falling in a shower of spray into a broad pool, which had formed directly across the way by which they had come.

"A geyser!" cried Theo and Sallie in one breath.

"Yes, and it goes up higher than the highest one in the Yellowstone Park," declared Ham. "That was the noise we heard."

"What a queer smell!" cried Mrs. Carberry. "Oh, isn't it just dreadful!"

"Sulphur," said Sallie. "Bless me, it makes me quite sick. Drive past, quick, Theo. I can't stand this!"

Theo touched up the horses, and they went flying on toward the spouting geyser.

The disagreeable odor increased rapidly. It was almost unbearable.

Mrs. Carberry clapped her handkerchief to her nose, and so did Sallie.

As for Theo, it made him half blind, and quite light-headed.

He could not speak it choked him so, and he could see the horses shake their heads and half reel as they approached.

It was getting to be a serious business. Theo thought he was going to faint, but he shook himself and plied the whip vigorously and they were just flying past the geyser, when Ham, who had not said a word, suddenly collapsed and fell against Theo, his head dropping forward on his breast.

Instantly an explanation of the dead men at the mine flashed over Theo.

"This is what killed all those fellows!" he thought, and for a moment it seemed as though the dreadful suffocating stench must finish him, too, but he urged the reeling horses on and they passed beyond the geyser, and then the wind blew the horrid stench away.

The horses were reeking with perspiration, when Theo reined them in and turned to look at Ham.

"Is he dead? Has he fainted?" gasped Sallie, who, with Mrs. Carberry, had escaped the worst of it by the aid of their handkerchiefs.

"Don't know," choked Theo, "but I do know that I'm half dead, and look at the horses! They can scarcely get their breath."

Throwing the reins to Sallie, Theo jumped down and dragged Ham out of the carryall and laid him flat on the ground, where he worked over him, just as he would over a drowning man, and at last succeeded in restoring him to consciousness, after which they drove on to the mine, Ham completely recovering by the time they reached there.

Of course, there was a great deal of discussion about the singular phenomenon, and all agreed that it was more than likely that there must be another geyser of this sort near the house, and that it had been the cause of the sudden death of the unfortunate men whose remains they had found.

The horses were put into the stable, rubbed down and fed, while Sallie and Mrs. Carberry set about preparing dinner.

"I wouldn't go up against that geyser again for a thousand dollars," declared Ham, while they sat about the table discussing the affair.

"How did you feel when the fit was coming on to you, Ham?" Sallie asked.

"Why, my head kept getting bigger and bigger. I was so choked that I couldn't say a word, and, besides, I knew you were all in the same boat. Next thing I knew I didn't know

nothing, and Theo was punching me in the chest trying to make my lungs work."

Everybody laughed at the way Ham got his grammar mixed up, and Mrs. Carberry was in the act of describing her own sensations, when all at once there came a sharp rap at the door.

Mrs. Carberry gave a scream. Theo's fork stopped on its way to his mouth, while Ham cried out: "Who in thunder is that knocking at the door?"

The boys and Sallie were on their feet in an instant, but before they could reach the door an unearthly yell rang out.

"Peter, the Wild Boy!" cried Theo. "Keep back, Sallie! Keep back!"

He seized the big poker which stood alongside the open fireplace and, closely followed by Ham, ran out into the hall.

Again the Wild Boy gave his peculiar cry, and they could see him running toward the shaft-house, while there lying stretched upon the hall floor was the body of a man.

## CHAPTER XII.

### ATTACKED BY INDIANS.

Theo ran to the door, and stepping over the body, followed the movements of the Wild Boy with his eyes.

Peter made a bee-line for the shaft-house and disappeared inside.

"Let him go!" cried Ham. "For heaven's sake don't try to follow him!"

"Theo, I command you not to do it!" called Sallie from the room door. "You mustn't leave us alone here."

"All right," replied Theo, who, in fact, had no desire to risk a second interview with the Wild Boy. "Let's see who we have here? Why, it's that drunken fellow we left under the buggy at Forty Rod Pass."

"That's just who it is," declared Ham, "and he is drunk still."

"Pickled for fair, I should say," replied Theo. "How on earth did he get here?"

He turned the fellow over and examined him closely.

There could be no doubt about his condition. He was simply very drunk—paralyzed, so to speak.

Theo at once made up his mind that the Wild Boy must have brought him there in his arms, for certainly the man was in no condition to walk.

He was a rough-looking fellow of about forty years of age, apparently. His clothes were half torn off his body, covered with mud and still damp from the rain.

"Strange he didn't sober up," muttered Theo. "Wonder where he got his whisky? He doesn't seem to have any bottle about him, either."

"What are you going to do with the horrid beast?" asked Sallie. "We can't leave him here."

"We will take him upstairs into one of the rooms and throw him on the bed," said Theo. "Here, Ham, take hold. We can carry him all right, I guess. He will sober up some time, if he don't die on our hands. And it wouldn't surprise me a bit if he knew enough about this place to tell us how to get out."

It was a big lift for the two boys, but they finally managed to get the drunken man up into one of the chambers, where they dumped him down without ceremony, then joining the lads outside.

Of course, there was a great deal of discussion over this new happening.



Mrs. Carberry declared that she would not enter the house again while the drunken man remained there.

Sallie told her that she could sleep in the barn, and the good woman declared that she had rather do so than remain in the house.

Soon after this, Theo made a careful examination of the ore in the wagons. He saw that it was very rich in gold, but it was a hard quartz ore, and there was no chance of getting any of the precious metal out.

While he and Ham were thus engaged, they heard Sallie calling from the neighborhood of the elevator.

"Come here, Theo! Come here, quick!" she cried.

Theo and Ham ran to the elevator and found Sallie and Mrs. Carberry in a great state of excitement, as they had just discovered alongside the elevator a small door, which, upon being opened, disclosed a dark passage leading in under the cliffs.

"Good for you, Sallie!" cried Theo. "This is great! Like enough it's a way out. Ham, go back to the house and get the lantern; we will explore this passage at once."

"You won't leave us," said Sallie. "We must all go."

"You needn't expect me to go into that hole, for I won't do it," declared Mrs. Carberry, but when Sallie assured her that if she refused she would be left behind with the drunken man and Peter, the Wild Boy, she speedily changed her mind.

Theo now lighted the lantern and led the way into the passage.

It was just a natural cave and soon widened out, taking a winding course.

Following it for a short distance, the explorers came to a place where the passage divided; they took the left-hand turn and had not proceeded more than a hundred yards when it suddenly came to an end in front of a big door hung upon rollers, like the door of a barn.

"Now we have struck something!" cried Theo. "Lay hold here, Ham, and help me open this door."

But when Theo tackled it, he found that he did not need any help, for the door rolled aside as easy as possible, and to the surprise of all there was the mine right in front of them, with its house, barn, big wagons, elevator and all.

"Great Scott!" cried Ham. "Why, we have just gone around in a circle. We are just beyond the elevator on the other side."

Theo recognized the outside of the door as soon as he closed it. He had observed it before, but thought it had something to do with the elevator, never imagining that it was a door.

"Why, we could easily drive right in here with the carriage," exclaimed Sallie. "I wonder where that other passage leads to, Theo? See, there has been a team in here before."

"You're right. Here are the tracks plain enough. We'll soon find out what it means. Ham, you stay here with the ladies. I'll go ahead and see."

Waving the lantern before him, Theo hurried back to the junction, and then took the right-hand passage.

He did not have to go far, for within a hundred yards it opened out into another valley which extended back among the mountains as far as he could see.

"Hooray! A way out at last!" cried Theo, joyfully, and he lost no time in getting back.

"I've found it! I've found the way out!" he shouted. "Hurry up, Ham! There's nothing to keep us now from getting right on the move."

This was joyful news. Mrs. Carberry was wild at the prospect of getting away.

No time was lost in harnessing, and when all was ready, Theo and Ham went upstairs to look into the condition of the drunken man.

It had not changed at all. He lay there just where they had left him, in a deep sleep.

"We can't do anything for him, Ham," declared Theo. "Come on! He will have to get out of his troubles the best way he can."

So they helped the ladies into the carryall and, taking the reins once more, Theo drove through the passage into the other valley.

"We are all right now," declared Sallie. "See, here is a regular trail. There has been many a team this way before."

They drove on for about a mile, following the valley through many windings, when all at once the whole party was startled by hearing the strange cry of Peter, the Wild Boy, again.

Theo reined in instantly.

He could not see Peter, but as he looked this way and that along the cliffs, a shot suddenly rang out, and Mrs. Carberry uttered a wild scream.

She was not frightened without good reason, either, for up on the rocks ahead three Indians, armed with rifles, suddenly showed themselves.

Just as Theo caught sight of them they threw up their rifles and fired down at the carryall.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE DISCOVERY OF THE MOUNTAIN MINE.

Crack! crack! went the rifles of the Indians on the rocks. The shots came whizzing about the carryall.

"Down! down!" cried Theo. "Get down as low as you can! Heavens, if they shoot the horses what shall we do?"

Sallie and Mrs. Carberry crouched down, while Ham made haste to get up a pair of excellent Remington rifles which had been discovered in the storehouse of the mine, although we neglected to mention the fact.

"Can you work them, Ham?" asked Theo.

"You bet!"

"Then do it. I'll drive on as fast as ever I can."

Theo lashed the horses, and the way the carryall went bumping over the stony ground was a caution.

Ham, who had enjoyed considerable experience as an Indian fighter when he was still quite a boy, made the most of the situation now.

He leaned out and let fly.

The first shot was a miss.

The Indians, running along over the ledges, sent three bullets flying back.

They did not seem to want to kill the horses.

Theo jumped at the conclusion that it was probably the horses they were after, and that they were willing to kill everybody in the carryall if they could only get them, which was, no doubt, a fact.

"You'll have to do better than that, old man!" he said to Ham. "Either we have got to do those fellows up or they'll do us."

"Merely on us! We shall all be killed!" screamed Mrs. Carberry. "I shall die of apoplexy if I stay crouched down like this."

"Do be quiet," said Sallie. "Mrs. C., you are no worse off than the rest of us. Ham, why don't you shoot? Either do it or hand the rifle over to me."

"Take the other one if you want it," replied Ham. "How can I get a sight with this old thing joggling the way it is?"



"Try it, Ham. Now, while they are on that ledge!" said Theo, encouragingly.

The Indians had run ahead and taken their station upon a prominent ledge which the carryall must soon pass.

"I know what I am about," said Ham. "Give me a show, will you?"

It was a serious business, though, for the Indians were evidently waiting for the carryall to come under their perch.

"We had better stop and go back," said Sallie.

"We are safe if we can once pass them," answered Theo.

"I don't believe they can get any further along those rocks."

Bang! Bang!

Ham fired twice in quick succession.

One of the Indians dropped his rifle and fell back with a yell, while the rifle of one of the others went ringing down over the rocks, and the Indian clapped his left hand upon his right arm, and with the third Indian ducked down and disappeared.

"There!" said Ham, triumphantly. "I've done for two of them, and I guess that other fellow won't bother us any more. Drive ahead, Theo. It's all safe."

Theo gave the horses the whip again, and they were soon past the danger point and bumping along over the stony trail.

At the same instant the strange cry of Peter, the Wild Boy, rang out, echoing back from the cliffs.

It was repeated three times, and had a triumphant ring.

"Where is the fellow?" exclaimed Theo.

"It sounds as though he was right here in the carriage with us," said Sallie.

"It's queer how he gets over the ground," said Ham. "He seems to be everywhere. It just beats the band."

The mystery seemed deeper, when an hour later the same cry was suddenly heard again.

Meanwhile, the carryall had covered a good ten miles, keeping along the valley until it came to a sudden end, and the carryall went winding up the mountainside, by the roughest kind of a trail, until it was at least two thousand feet from the floor of the valley.

"Mercy on us!" cried Mrs. Carberry. "Has the Wild Boy got wings? Has he flown after us?"

The solution of the mystery popped into Theo's head all in an instant.

"Look behind you!" he whispered. "Look quick, Sallie, but don't make any noise."

Mrs. Carberry thought it would be a good plan for her to look, too, and when she did so she gave a yell which threw all other styles of cry far into the shade.

Peter had simply "cut behind."

There he was, holding on to the back spring of the carryall with his hands and feet, swinging like some big monkey.

He grinned at the ladies and showed his teeth, and then, dropping down, went bounding off over the level ridges upon which the carryall had just come.

Ham threw up his rifle and was going to fire, but Theo checked him.

"Don't! Don't do it!" he said. "Peter hasn't done us any

harm. He warned us about the Indians, and we might have all been killed if he hadn't sung out the way he did."

"That's right," said Sallie. "Let him go. I begin to look at him quite in the light of an old friend."

Theo had reined in, and for a few moments they watched the strange creature in silence.

He turned off the trail and ran up a pile of rocks at a little distance ahead, there disappearing, but just before he vanished he turned and waved his hand beckoningly to Theo, as though to come on.

"Say, Ham," remarked Theo, "that fellow is no fool. He has kept running around ahead of us all the while, but it always means something, and you will find that it means something this time—just you wait and see."

"Why, it is perfectly dreadful" said Mrs. Carberry, "to think that we have been calmly sitting here in the carryall with the Wild Boy hanging on close behind us. It makes me shiver. I declare it does."

"Get up!" cried Theo, giving the horses the whip.

He drove on, and the trail led them up to another and smaller ridge which was bare of trees, and gave an uninterrupted view in all directions for miles and miles around.

"Wonderful!" cried Sallie. "We almost are at the top of the peak. Oh, isn't this a beautiful spot?"

"By thunder, there's another mine!" exclaimed Theo, pointing to a group of buildings further along the ridge.

As he spoke, all saw Peter pop out of the door of the largest building.

He waved his arms about as much as to say: "Look here! See this!" and then ran off among the buildings and disappeared.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE CRASH IN THE NIGHT

Theo drove up to the mine and all got out of the carryall.

As the horses were pretty well warmed up by the exertion of dragging the heavy load up the mountains, Theo carefully blanketed them, and then the exploration began.

It was a mine almost as well equipped as the one in the valley.

There was a fair-sized living-house, a barn, three big wagons, two houses with shafts which ran down deeper than the eye could penetrate.

There was also an ore-house, with a good supply of gold ore stowed away inside.

It was hard quartz ore, like that at the other mine, and Theo judged that it must be very valuable.

There were no skeletons here; no sign that any human being had been on the premises for a long time, nor did they see anything of Peter, the Wild Boy, as they moved about among the buildings of the mine.

"I suppose it's more of Dade Fuller's operations," remarked Theo. "Sallie, there are plenty of canned goods in the store-



remain there at the house. You and Mrs. Carberry get us up a good dinner. Ham will stay and keep guard and attend to the horses. I want to look around a bit and see how we are going to get off this ridge when we finally get ready to make a start."

"All right," replied Sallie, cheerfully. "I'm good for any old thing you want done, Theo. By the way, you never looked into that little book which you took from the skeleton we found in the road. Do you know, I never thought of it again until now."

"I have looked it over," replied Theo, "but the writing is so bad that it is very hard to make out what it's all about. Seems to be a description of these mines and a sort of a diary. I think it must have been written by Dade Fuller himself."

"It ought to be carefully read, Theo. It may tell us how to get out of here, and that's important for us. You know I have half an idea that we are cut off again."

"Sallie, so have I," replied Theo, anxiously, "and that's why I want to get off by myself and explore. The trail we have been following was evidently made by the wagons from this mine to the other. I don't believe we can get off this ridge by any other way but the way we came."

"Isn't it aggravating, Theo, and just look there!"

Sallie pointed off across the many peaks which go to make up the "Mountains of the Moon," all in plain sight before them.

There, far in the distance, perched away up on the side of its own mountain, lay Black Top Hall, not many miles as the crow flies, and yet as inaccessible to Theo and his friends as though it had actually been located in the moon.

"So near and yet so far," sighed Theo. "Well, Sallie, we are bound to get there, some time, if we keep on trying. Don't despair."

"Not I," laughed Sallie. "It's a regular picnic. If I can only manage to keep Mrs. Carberry's spirits up—that's all I ask."

Theo went to Ham and, explaining his purpose, took his rifle and started to explore the ridge, taking it first on the right.

It was just as he had anticipated, within a quarter of a mile he came to its end, and here there was a precipice a thousand feet down, with another valley at its foot, which looked as desolate and deserted as though it had never been trodden by the foot of man.

Theo then skirted around the edge of this precipice, passing behind the mine and continuing on until he came to the end of the ridge on the left, where he could look back to the trail up which they had come.

It was all the same.

There was but one way up the ridge, and one way down.

Once more they were cut off, and there was nothing for it but to remain where they were, or to return to the other mine.

Theo was in despair. For a long time he stood there looking off at the vast panorama spread out before him, and then returned to the mine to find dinner ready, and Sallie as cheerful as ever, in spite of his unsatisfactory report.

"Never mind!" she declared. "We will stay here to-night,

and give the horses a good rest, and then start out to-morrow again and see if we can't do better. Give me the chance and I'll cheer you all up. What I ask you to do is, not to say one despairing word."

Of course, it was impossible to get the blues with such a person as Sallie about.

The afternoon wore away, and as night came on a storm swept down upon the "Mountains of the Moon," and it began to rain.

Theo built up a big fire on the open hearth, and after supper a pleasant evening was passed.

Sallie had brought the banjo along, and they told stories, and, taken altogether, really put in quite a jolly time of it.

About nine o'clock Sallie and Mrs. Carberry retired to one of the rooms upstairs, while Theo and Ham brought down mattresses and blankets and made up beds on the floor by the fire, for truth told, Theo felt rather worried about Indians, although the fact that so many valuable things lay about untouched made it look as though no Indian had ever been up there on the ridge.

"Which of us takes first watch, Ham?" Theo asked, when everything was all prepared.

"Well, I'm thundering sleepy," replied Ham. "If you are not so very sleepy yourself, Theo, I wish you would give me first show."

"Lie down and sleep till midnight," said Theo, promptly. "I'll call you then."

It was dreary work watching. The wind lashed about the house, making it fairly sway at times, and the rain beat against the windows dismally.

Theo sat by the fire for a while and, growing sleepy, got up and paced the floor.

He was thus engaged when all at once, along about eleven o'clock, a fearful crash was heard outside, which shook the house to that extent that it seemed amazing to Theo that Ham did not instantly wake up.

At the same moment the cry of Peter, the Wild Boy, rang out hard and shrill.

Clapping on his hat and seizing his rifle, Theo rushed out of doors.

## CHAPTER XV.

### WARNED BY PETER, THE WILD BOY.

Once outside, Theo peered about, but could not see anything. It was impossible for his eyes to penetrate the darkness.

The wind howled about him, the rain blew in his face, but above the noise of the storm that same unearthly cry rose again, showing that whatever the matter might be, Peter, the Wild Boy, was right on hand.

Just then a window opened and Sallie looked out.

"That you, Theo?" she called.

"Yes," replied Theo. "I am here!"



"What in the world is the matter? What was that terrible noise?"

"Just what I am trying to find out."

"Wait a moment. I'll be down."

"Better stay where you are. You'll be drenched to the skin."

"No, no! I'm ready to take my share of the rough as well as the smooth. Mrs. Carberry has slept through it all. I'll be right down."

The brave girl joined Theo a moment later.

"If we only had a light we might be able to do something," she said, "but as it is—what in the world! There's our light, now!"

It flashed up suddenly through the darkness. It seemed to be a blazing pine knot, and Theo thought he could see a hand holding it, but he could not make out anything else.

"Peter?" said Sallie, questioningly.

"I think so," replied Theo. "Is it a bait to lure us into a trap?"

"Theo, it is hard to tell, he has had every chance to harm us but has not done so. Even when he carried you upon the rocks he did you no injury."

"Sallie, do you want me to go over to that light?"

"One of us ought to go and see what it means, or both."

"You simply shan't go, so that settles it. Get back into the house and I will go and see what it is all about."

"I'll stay here," replied Sallie, quietly. "Be careful, Theo. Hold your rifle ready."

Theo needed no one to instruct him on that score. He was quite ready for business, when he walked over toward the flashing torch, and his attention was fixed on it so intently that he did not hear Sallie's light footsteps following him, although she kept not three yards away.

As he drew nearer the light he perceived that it was low down toward the ground, something which he had not been able to determine before, owing to the slope of the land.

The hand remained absolutely immovable, and the torch flared and sputtered in the rain, the flame being blown all over to one side by the wind.

Now, above the howl of the storm, Theo began to hear a sound which filled him with fear.

It was water rushing down over the high precipice which rose alongside the trail, by which they had come up on the ridge.

This precipice extended for about a quarter of a mile and then ended abruptly. All the rest of the ridge stood out from it like a great projecting shelf, with a descent of a thousand feet or more, with the sole exception of the narrow trail.

"Hello!" shouted Theo, as he drew nearer. "Hello! Hello!"

There was no other answer than Peter's strange cry, but Theo pushed on until suddenly he understood what it all meant.

"Great heavens! the trail has fallen! We are prisoners up here!" he gasped.

"Take it easy, Theo!" called Sallie's voice behind him. "Don't get excited. I'm right here!"

"Oh, Sallie!" It was all Theo could say.

There, where the solid rock over which they had driven the

carryall had been, was a break at least twenty feet wide, and down on the side of the rocks the hand holding the torch projected, while a little further on, water was rushing over the cliff, part pouring into the break and part spreading itself over the ridge.

"I see! I see!" cried Sallie. "Thank you, Peter, for showing us our danger. Come up and see us. We won't harm you, my boy."

The only answer was the cry.

"What is he standing on?" asked Theo. "He must be in a cave."

He leaned forward and tried to look over the rocks.

Instantly the torch was withdrawn and they found themselves in total darkness.

"It's no use, Theo. He's shy," said Sallie. "Let us go back."

"Wait," said Theo, hoarsely. "We are in great danger, Sallie. You don't seem to realize."

"Indeed I do. We are stuck up here, and no chance of getting away."

"Worse than that."

"How worse?"

"The water."

"Theo!"

"Ah! You see now. Some lake has broken loose up there on the top of the cliffs. The mine buildings are in a hollow—in fact, almost the entire ridge is one great hollow. How long is it going to take the water to fill it? We shall be driven to the very edge of the ridge at last."

As Theo spoke, a great mass of rocks came crashing down from the cliffs above where they stood, followed by a tremendous rush of water which deluged them from head to foot.

"We are lost!" gasped Sallie.

Theo thought so. The water came in a volume which was simply tremendous.

Already it was up around their ankles and seemed to be rising every moment.

Indeed, it rose so rapidly that before they had gone back a dozen yards through the darkness it was up around their knees.

"We shall never be able to reach the house," panted Sallie. "Oh, Theo, I can't keep my feet."

"Courage!" said Theo, and he caught the brave girl in his arms and staggered on.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### IN DEADLY PERIL.

Sallie never uttered a word until Theo had her back in the house and set her down on the doorstep.

By this time matters had become pretty serious, for the water was up around Theo's waist when he reached the foot of the steps.



Now the house, and in fact all the buildings of the mine, stood on a slight elevation and as yet water had not reached them, but the top of the ridge was dish-shaped, with a narrow rim of higher land overhanging the precipice.

If the water continued to rise Theo knew only too well that there was no hope for them. They would either have to throw themselves over the precipice and commit suicide or be drowned.

"Are you very wet, Sallie?" asked Theo, as he deposited his fair burden on the steps.

"Wet! What does that amount to?" cried Sallie. "Theo, this is a bad business. Trifles don't go now."

"You bet it's a bad business, Sallie. I am afraid it means simply death."

"I'm not going to think that. I am going to take a more cheerful view of it all. Let's you and I put our heads together and try and think what we ought to do."

"Right. Don't wake up Mrs. Carberry till we have decided, though. She will only take to screaming."

"You bet I won't. She is so nervous that she will knock every idea out of my head. Wonder if Ham is still asleep?"

"Yes, here he is, snoring away," replied Theo, throwing open the door. "If the whole mountain was to blow over I don't believe he would wake up."

"Don't disturb him, Theo. Let's you and I hold a council of war and decide what to do."

"There's only one hope, Sallie—or two."

"I see three."

"Name them."

"You first, Theo. The man should always be the leader in a case like this."

"There are two mining shafts here. Mining shafts are apt to have drifts. This ridge is but a small affair when you come to consider. One of the drifts may be cut through to the outside of the mountain at a much lower level than where we are now, and from there there may be some way of getting down into the valley below."

"All possible, but all the purest supposition."

"Granted, but is it not worth trying?"

"It most decidedly is. Next!"

"The other chance is that our friend Peter will give us the steer."

"That we may confidently hope for, up to the last moment, but it may never come to pass."

"Now for yours, Sallie."

"All right. Here goes. First, that you may find a way by which we can climb up to the top of those cliffs where the water is coming over."

"Very doubtful. I looked the cliffs over yesterday, with the idea of climbing up, but I could see no way."

"Crossed off. My second idea was the same as your second, hope that Peter would sing out and give us the steer."

"And the third?"

"That the water would stop coming over the cliffs before we were all drowned."

"Sallie, there is little hope in any of these suggestions."

"I think so myself, Theo. Your first suggestion is the only one which is of the slightest value. Let us get over to one of the shafts at once and see what can be done."

"Before we wake them up?"

"Yes, yes! Let's you and I settle it alone."

"The horses and carriage will have to be abandoned."

"Of course."

"Too bad! Too bad! Well, it can't be helped. Come on."

"Wait till I get a lantern and then I will go," replied Theo.

"There's one in the other room."

He was ready in a moment and they started out. When Theo waved the lantern back in the direction by which they had come there was a perfect lake and the water seemed to be rapidly advancing toward the foot of the steps.

Theo hurried along the ridge to the nearest shaft-house.

Here there was no modern hoisting machine, but just a tub and a windlass controlled by a ratchet by means of which the tub could be raised and lowered.

"It's useless; we have got to have Ham!" cried Theo. "You never could let me down in that tub, or if you did you could not get me up again."

"There's worse to it than that, Theo. You are strong enough to lower us, no doubt, but how are you coming down at the end?"

"Don't think of that. If I can save the rest of you I will take my chances. I can go down that rope, hand-over-hand. Run now and fetch Ham. Wake up Mrs. Carberry. Prepare her mind for what has got to be, and I'll study the situation here a bit."

"In the dark, Theo? I can never get back without the lantern?"

"Take it. Here's a hanging-lamp and there seems to be oil in it. Just wait till I light it and then go on."

Sallie was soon off on her errand, and in a few moments Ham came tumbling in with the lantern, looking very badly scared.

"Theo, what in the world is the matter?" he exclaimed. "Sallie says we are all going to be drowned."

"Did you see the lake, Ham?"

"Did I see it? Why, it's almost up to the foot of the steps! Sallie told me all about the whole business. By thunder, I wish we had never come up here."

"It's rather late in the day to wish that now, Ham. Brace up! Our only hope seems to be in finding a way out through the mine. Do you think you are strong enough to let me down in that tub?"

"Of course I am, but what about the last one down if we all go?"

"I'm to be the last one down."

"Not much!"

"It's settled, Ham. I can go down, hand-over-hand."

"You can't and you won't, but I can and will."

"Ham, you're a good fellow!" said Theo, "and I shan't forget this. However, I am not going to let you run all the risk. We will toss up for last place. Now that's final, so don't say another word, but let me down to the bottom of this shaft."

Theo got into the tub then, placing the lantern at his feet



on the bottom, and Ham lowered him down between the ragged walls of rock, bristling with gold in places and dripping with water everywhere.

Lower and lower Theo dropped, until at about sixty feet the tub struck the bottom of the shaft, landing in two feet of water.

It was all over. There was no drift, no way of escape, and if the flood continued it would be only a matter of a short time before the two feet of water would be changed to sixty-two.

"But by that time we shall all be dead," muttered Theo, grimly, "so it don't make much difference after all, and, anyhow, there is still a chance on the other shaft."

He shook the rope and Ham immediately responded and the tub began to rise.

Just before it reached the mouth of the shaft Theo heard the well-known cry of Peter, the Wild Boy, singing out in the distance, loud and shrill.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE ESCAPE BY THE SHAFT.

"Peter is at it again, Theo!" cried Ham, looking down into the hole.

"I hear him!" replied Theo. "Hoist away!"

"Any luck?"

"Not a bit. There is no drift."

"Bad job that. What in thunder are we going to do?"

"Try the other shaft. I have good hopes now. Our friend, the Wild Boy, don't yell out for nothing. I've found out that much about him. There he goes again. Give him the call, Ham. Let him know that we hear."

Ham yelled at the top of his lungs, closely imitating the Wild Boy's cry, which was not repeated again.

Theo seized the lantern, and as he went out of the shaft-house he saw two other lights penetrating the blackness.

One was coming toward the shaft-house and was bobbing up and down, the other was a mere glimmer shining out of the door of the other shaft-house, and it was this which gave Theo hope.

"Sallie and Mrs. Carberry are comin!" cried Ham. "We shall have music now."

"So is the water," said Theo. "Look! Here it comes! It will be level with the shafts in ten minutes' time. Run, Ham, and help the ladies through it. Bring them to the other shaft-house. I want to find out what is going on there."

The water was sweeping along the foot of the little rise upon which the shaft stood, and one glance at it was enough to banish all hope.

"We've got to hustle or we are all goners," he muttered, as he bounded into the other shaft house.

The light seemed to come out of the shaft. Bending over, Theo could see it shining in the wall far down in the depths.

"Thank you, Peter!" shouted Theo, leaning far over the edge of the shaft. "I see. I understand!"

There was no answer, not a sound but the beating of the rain on the roof overhead.

Theo started out then, meeting Sallie, Ham and Mrs. Carberry almost at the door.

He fully expected to have Mrs. Carberry burst out into her usual lamentations, but like many other fretful people Mrs. Carberry proved herself quite a hero when there was real danger on hand.

"Well, Theo, this is a nice mess you have got us into!" she exclaimed. "I suppose we shall all be drowned, but thank goodness a body can only die once."

"Good for you, Mrs. Carberry!" said Theo. "You're a brick. We are not going to die. Sallie, the last hope has been realized. Pete, the Wild Boy, has called us again."

"I heard him," replied Sallie, quietly. "The water was all up over the floor when we left the house, Theo. Our last hope lies here."

Theo took them inside and pointed to the light down in the shaft.

"Ham goes first," he said, "and Sallie follows if all is right."

"No," said Ham. "Don't forget our agreement, Theo."

"But the risk is equal. Whoever goes down first has got to meet Peter, the Wild Boy. That's my idea."

"Toss up for it. Fair play!"

"Settled!" cried Theo. "There's no time for argument. Here goes! Heads you first, tails means me."

He drew a cent out of his pocket and flipped it up.

It landed on the floor, heads uppermost, and Ham immediately seized the rope and prepared to go into the tub.

"Here comes the water!" cried Sallie. "It's right after us!"

It was so! The water came creeping over the threshold. It was the last call. If there was failure now it meant death, but nobody said a word about it. Even Mrs. Carberry was perfectly cool.

Theo jumped to the windlass and Ham, getting into the tub, was lowered down.

"Watch, Sallie," said Theo. "If Peter isn't there to help Ham into the drift I don't feel sure that he can get in. Hello! Some one has got hold of the rope now."

"It's Peter! He's looking out from a hole!" cried Sallie. "Now, Mrs. Carberry, don't clutch my arm so. I don't believe he will hurt us. If it hadn't been for this same Wild Boy I have no doubt we should have all been drowned in our beds."

"The tub is light!" cried Theo. "Can you see Ham?"

"No. He seems to have gone into a hole."

There was a moment of breathless anxiety, and then Ham called out:

"Next! Come on, Sallie! It's all right!"

"Hooray!" shouted Theo.

But it was Mrs. Carberry and not Sallie who went down next. It was hard work getting her into the tub after Theo wound it up, but the good woman never said a word, much to Theo's relief.



He let her down slowly, and Sallie saw Ham reach out and pull the tub in toward the drift.

It was Sallie's turn next, and Theo stood alone on the deck of the shaft-house.

The water was now pouring down into the shaft and already stood ankle deep; it had drenched poor Sallie as she went down.

"Coming, Theo?" cried Ham, thrusting his head out of the drift.

"In a moment!" answered Theo. "Say, Ham, is that Wild Boy there?"

"Skipped out!" shouted Ham. "He pulled the tub in for me and then ran off through the drift. Come on, for gracious sake, or it will be too late!"

"Give me a moment to let the tub down to the bottom and you will see me," replied Theo, coolly, unwinding the windlass.

It took all the rope, and there was a hundred feet of it at least.

At last the tub struck the water and the rope began to run slack.

Theo waited for nothing further.

Clutching the rope, he dropped over the edge of the shaft and hung while Ham, leaning as far out of the drift as he dared, held the lantern, breathlessly watching, while Theo came down, hand-over-hand.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE TERRIBLE SITUATION ON THE LEDGE.

Theo's training in the gymnasium at Chicago came right into play now, for he went down the slack rope without the least trouble, his hands never slipping, and when Ham drew him in toward the drift he dropped off and stood with the others, unharmed, but drenched to the skin by the torrent of water which came pouring down the shaft.

"Thank heaven, we are all here alive!" cried Sallie. "Theo, I always knew you were brave, but——"

"Now don't throw flowers at me, Sallie," broke in Theo. "This is no time for compliments. We are very far from being out of the woods yet, but we will follow the lead of Peter, the Wild Boy, and I look to see it all end well. Come on!"

There was a blazing pine knot stuck in a crevice in the rocky floor of the drift and Theo seized it and waved it ahead.

The drift was about four feet wide, and so low that none of the party could stand upright. The walls were dripping with moisture; all was cold, damp and disagreeable, but it was better than being drowned overhead.

"Come on! Come on!" cried Theo. "Bring on the lantern, Ham! I'll hold this thing as long as I can, but we will have to depend upon the lantern when it gets too low. If Peter can go this way we can, but I don't propose to stay in this hole any longer than I have to, you bet."

"I shall die of the rheumatism if we do," groaned Mrs. Carberry, returning to her old habits, now that the immediate danger was passed.

But nobody else said anything, and Theo hurried forward, certain that they had not far to go.

And so it proved. The drift was not over sixty feet in length and sure enough it was open at the other end, just as Theo had hoped.

It was the rush of cold air which warned Theo what they were coming to.

It blew the torch out and he seized the lantern and crept along carefully, coming to the end at last.

"Keep back till I see what we have got here!" he called out. "We are right on the side of the cliff."

So they were, but there was a narrow ledge of rock about four feet wide extending beyond the end of the drift.

It ran in both directions, as Theo could see when he waved his lantern outside.

Above, the cliff was perpendicular and rose some forty feet up to the top of the ridge. Below, it was a straight descent into the valley—a matter of a thousand feet and more.

Theo turned and communicated the dismal prospect to his friends.

"We have got to go along the ledge, that's all there is about it," declared Sallie, "but let us wait a few moments. Perhaps Peter will tell us which way to go."

"I was thinking of that," said Theo. "Ham, give him the call, your fog-horn voice is good for at least a mile."

Ham came out on the ledge and gave the Wild Boy's cry.

He was instantly answered, the sound coming from the right.

"That's our way," said Theo, promptly. "Sallie, we have simply got to go. How about you, Mrs. Carberry? Take a look out here first and see what you are coming to. You want to cling to the wall, and if you value your life you don't want to look down."

Mrs. Carberry looked out and shuddered.

"What must be, must," she said. "You have all got to go, and I don't want to stay here alone."

"That's the talk!" cried Theo. "Mrs. Carberry, you are a regular brick, and Peter, the Wild Boy, will help us. Come on. I'm first this time and Ham last."

Once they were started not a word was spoken. Theo walked steadily along the narrow ledge, waving the lantern before him. Sallie came next, and Mrs. Carberry followed, one hand upon the wall, while with the other she clutched Sallie's dress. Ham brought up the rear.

The rain struck over their heads, and they were sheltered from the wind by the cliffs.

Every now and then the cry of Peter, the Wild Boy, rang out, and this cry, which had once seemed so dreadful, now served to encourage them, for there could no longer be any doubt that Peter meant to play the part of a friend.

"We shall see him in a moment," said Theo at last. "We are getting nearer and nearer. If we keep on much longer we shall be all the way around the ridge."

Just then Peter called again, and then twice again in quick succession.



Theo held up his lantern and saw him standing at no great distance ahead, wildly waving his arms.

He saw something else, too, which sent his heart up into his mouth, for between them and the Wild Boy there was a break in the ridge at least five feet wide.

"Sallie," he whispered, "look out for Mrs. Carberry. There's trouble ahead."

"I know it," replied Sallie, in the same low tone. "I saw the break when you held up the lantern."

"What's that you are saying?" cried Mrs. Carberry, whose ears were a little sharper than Sallie thought.

"Don't be alarmed. Only a little trouble. You see the Wild Boy?"

"Yes, yes! The sight of him is bad enough. Anything worse?"

"Look down on the path. Theo, hold up the lantern so that Mrs. Carberry can see. Hold on tight to me now and tight to the wall. There is no danger. Peter is going to help us out all right."

Such was evidently Peter's intention, for he was pointing down at the break in the path with one hand and at himself with the other, as much as to say, "Trust me to bring it out all right."

But Mrs. Carberry's nerves had been tried too much.

The instant she caught sight of the break the good woman gave a piercing scream and fainted, dragging Sallie down after her upon the narrow ledge, off which she rolled and would surely have fallen into the abyss if Sallie had not been able to seize her hand.

Quick as lightning Theo caught Sallie around the waist with both hands, running the ring of his lantern up on his arm and there they stood, with Mrs. Carberry dangling over the ledge, while the cry of Peter, the Wild Boy, rang out loud and shrill.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### SAVED BY THE WILD BOY.

"A-yow! A-yow! A-yow!"

Loud and shrill the cry of Peter, the Wild Boy, rang out across the break.

It was a horrible sound in itself, but it sent a thrill of encouragement into Theo's heart, heard now in the darkness and storm.

Poor Theo's situation was indeed terrible.

There he stood, holding on to the fainting form of Mrs. Carberry dangling over the precipice, with Sallie holding on to him desperately and Ham Hilt pulling back on Sallie.

Not a word was spoken.

It was one of those awful moments which may mean that death was to come with the next.

And while Peter, the Wild Boy, shouted on the other side of the break, Theo just shut his eyes and pulled, and the

united strength of all three was just sufficient to drag Mrs. Carberry up and lay her down on the ridge.

"Oh, Theo! Oh, Theo!" Sallie gasped out.

"Now don't you go and faint, Sallie!" cried Theo. "We have saved her. But, oh, oh, oh! I would not want to do that again!"

"A-yow! A-yow! A-yow!" screamed the Wild Boy.

"Look! Look!" cried Ham! "He has got a plank!"

If Theo had seen it rain gold at his feet it would not have been more welcome than the sight he now beheld, for so taken up had he been with Mrs. Carberry that he had not even looked across the break.

It was just as Ham said.

In some mysterious way, Peter had obtained a plank, and there he was motioning to Theo to help him place it across the break.

"Look after Mrs. Carberry, Sallie!" cried Theo. "Hooray for Peter! By gracious, we are saved!"

He stepped to the edge of the break and, after placing the lantern in such a position that it would throw its light across, called out to Peter to push the plank toward him.

Peter seemed to understand, but the plank was a heavy one, and it was all he could do to handle it.

At last, however, he managed to push it far enough over for Theo to get hold of the other end, and the plank rested safely across the break.

The moment it was in position, Peter, with one resounding cry, darted off around the rocks and disappeared.

"He's gone!" cried Ham.

"Yes, but he's done his work!" exclaimed Theo. "Blessed Peter! What should we have done without him! Sallie, how is Mrs. Carberry now?"

"She is just coming to," replied Sallie. "Be quiet and gentle with her, Theo. Let us all hope for the best. Something seems to tell me that we shall be saved."

"I'll go ahead and see what lies beyond here," said Theo. "Get her on her feet as soon as you can, Sallie. I'll leave you the lantern. No, no! Don't urge me to take it. You can't stay here in the dark, but I can feel my way along. Good-by! I shall come back all right. Look after the ladies, Ham."

Thus saying, Theo boldly crossed the plank and went on around the ledge, which continued for about a hundred yards, and then came to an end against perpendicular rocks.

It was impossible to advance further, but to his great joy Theo saw that the precipice ended here, and there was a path, very steep and rocky to be sure, but still a path, leading down into the valley below.

"Ham! Ham!" he shouted.

"Hello!" came the reply around the rocks.

"We are all right. Tell every one to brace up! We can get down now!"

Wild with excitement, Theo hurried back to find Mrs. Carberry on her feet again and quite calm.

"Theo Kimball, you have saved my life and I shan't forget it," said the good woman. "Don't worry about me any more. I am going to be quiet now."

Theo lost no time in telling the good news.



"It's mighty rough," he said, "but I believe we can go right down into the valley. Now take hold of me, Mrs. Carberry, and Sallie will hold on to you, and it will all be over in a minute. Here we go."

Mrs. Carberry just shut her eyes and tottered over the plank. In a moment they were at the top of the steep descent, and then followed a long scramble down the mountain, but at no time did the path offer any serious difficulties.

The rain had now stopped and pretty soon the clouds began to pass over, and the moon came out, making the lantern scarcely necessary.

"Aren't we almost down, Theo?" asked Sallie at last. "It seems as though it was only a step to the bottom, and yet the path keeps winding around so."

"It can't be much further," replied Theo. "Why, look! There are horses down there! Are we coming to another of Dade Fuller's mysterious mines?"

"Why, it's the same old mine!" cried Ham. "Look, Theo! There's the elevator! There's the shaft-house! We are coming down the mountain right back to where we started out!" And it was so!

It was not until long afterward that Theo understood that the windings of the valley had taken them to a point on the "Mountains of the Moon" directly above the mine.

Ten minutes more brought them to the "house of skeletons," as Ham called it, and their journey was over.

It had all gone for nothing—worse than nothing. They had spent many hours in tedious travel, had lost their team and nearly lost their lives, and here they were back again at the place from which they had started out.

"We shall never get out of this fix!" exclaimed Sallie, showing discouragement for the first time. "It's a bad business, Theo. I am beginning to wonder if we shall ever see Black Top Hall again."

## CHAPTER XX.

### JACK MEADOWS GETS UP A SCARE.

"Don't be discouraged, Sallie!" said Theo. "If you are going to give up in despair I don't know what I shall do. As for the team I'm glad it's gone. We may be able to climb up out of here somehow, now that we haven't got the horses to think about, and I'm looking for Peter, the Wild Boy, to show us the way; but, first of all, we want to get a fire started inside here and dry our clothes."

"Wonder what's become of the drunkard?" said Ham. "He ought to have sobered up by this time."

They lighted the lamp in the big sitting-room, and Ham and Theo built up a roaring fire, leaving the ladies to dry themselves the best they could.

Theo then took the lantern and went into the kitchen to look for the drunken man. He had disappeared, however, and they could not find him anywhere about the house, nor did

they see anything of him until nine o'clock next morning, when, while they were all sitting at breakfast, the door was suddenly darkened, and in he walked.

"Beg pardon for disturbing you, ladies and gents," he said, with rough politeness. "I'm blame hungry. Could you give me some of that grub?"

Ham and Theo were on their feet the instant he appeared.

"Who are you?" demanded Theo. "What brought you here?"

"Well, that's more'n I know," replied the man. "Fact is, friends, I've been on the 'booze' for a week. Last I remember was getting into the stage down to Bellevue, s'pose I must have gone to pieces soon after. Blamed if I'll ever tell you who brought me in here to Dade Fuller's old mine. I've been asleep, I reckon. I came to myself a spell ago down in the old shaft-house. Blamed queer, hain't it? But as true as my name is Jack Meadows, I'm giving it to you straight."

"Sit down outside there and we will bring you something to eat," said Theo. "If you would wash up while we are getting it ready, I think it would do you good."

"You're right, and I'm going to do it," replied Mr. Jack Meadows, "but say, who are you? Has this place been opened up? Have you bought this here mine?"

"Nothing of the sort," replied Theo. "We got in here by accident, and we can't get out. Perhaps you know something about the place, and can show us the way."

"Well, if I can't, nobody can," was the reply. "I helped to build up this property. I know all its secrets. I reckon I'm the last man alive on earth who knows how to get in and out of this here valley, but I should want to know something more about you uns before I gave the secret away."

"Good enough!" cried Theo. "You're just the fellow we want to know. We belong up at Black Top Hall, and if you will show us the way out of these mountains you may be sure we will do the right thing by you. Can you work the elevator car? You——"

"Hold on! Hold on!" drawled Meadows. "I don't know about all this yere. What brings you here—that's what I want to know."

"I told you it was an accident," replied Theo. "There's no mystery about us, my man."

"Come now, don't you go to putting on any lugs with me, young fellow," growled Meadows. "Gimme something to eat and something to drink, too, if you have got it; after I'm cocked and primed with grub and lush I'll think it over. Mebbe I'll tell you how to get out of here and mebbe not."

"Humor him, Theo," whispered Sallie, and Theo followed her suggestion.

Mr. Jack Meadows then slouched out into the kitchen and washed up at the sink. Theo fixed up as good a plate of breakfast as he could and served him there.

The fellow ate it in gloomy silence.

"Don't talk to me till I'm through with my grub," was all he would say to Theo, and then when he was through he came slouching outside where the boys and Sallie stood waiting for him to appear.

"So you want to know how to get out of here?" he growled.



"Well, I can tell you, but I want to think on it, first. Looker here, this yere is the richest gold mine that was ever opened in the United States. Dade Fuller kep' it a secret, and he made me swear never to tell. Perhaps now he's dead and all the rest of the boys is dead, only me, I hadn't orter. I want to collar this here property. Guess I'll think twice before I give the secret away."

Then followed a long argument.

Theo and Sallie used every effort to persuade Jack Meadows to yield and show them the way out of the valley, but he remained firm.

"Not yet," he said. "I don't tell you nothing about it till I have time to think, so there hain't no use asking me again; and now if you have got through your everlasting talk I'm going to say a few words. Did you find any dead men around here?"

"A dozen or more," replied Theo. "I advise you to think twice about this business, my friend. There may be another dead man around here before you get through."

Jack Meadows laughed, winding up with a wicked chuckle.

"Them's threats," he said, "and they won't help you not a bit. Listen to me, boy. There's a pizen hot spring hyar what throws up a deadly gas every once in so often. That there gas killed them men. Usually it don't rise thick enough to do much harm away from the spring itself, but one night it came up and filled the hull valley, and everybody most was killed in a minit. Me and Dade Fuller was the only ones who had life enough to get out an' we hadn't much. Dade dropped dead on the road. He was that far gone when we started to leave that he forgot all about his baby boy what he had left behind. Ye see, his wife, she was dead some months before, and there was a boy three years old and—oh, waal, I hain't going to tell you the hull story. I got away, but I was looney for years. It's only lately that I got out of the asylum, and now I'm back to claim the mines. So-long, folks. I'm going to take a walk and get my head straight. Meantime, just remember that if the gas happens to rise I know how to get out, but you uns don't. Ha! ha! Don't you talk about dead men to me! I smell it in the air now." She's a-rising. I reckon I shall be soon rid of you, and then there won't be no one living what knows the secret of Dade Fuller's mine but Jack Meadows himself."

And Mr. Jack Meadows stalked away up the valley, leaving Theo and his friends in silent dismay.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### PLAYING FOR PETER.

"Well, upon my word! He is an interesting individual!" exclaimed Sallie, after Jack Meadows was beyond hearing. "What is a body to do with a specimen like that? Now, don't look so glum, Theo. You know we suspected from the first

that there was danger in that hot spring. We have good reason to. He hasn't told us anything new, but I do believe he has told us the truth."

"You take it cool, Sallie," said Theo, "and it's the only way. All the same there is great danger. There can't be any doubt about it. That wretch does not want to see us escape, and he will never raise his hand to help us. Like enough he is half mad still."

"Perhaps. I'm not going to worry, though. Don't say a word to Mrs. Carberry or she will go crazy."

"What we want is Peter, the Wild Boy," declared Theo, "and I mean to try for him. He can help us, and he must."

"Do it!" cried Sallie. "But tell me, Theo, is there anything peculiar in the air?"

"It seems to me just as if there was," answered Theo, "but still I can't exactly tell. It may be imagination. What do you think, Ham?"

"Don't know," replied Ham, who was looking rather scared. "Blessed if I can tell. I didn't smell it before that fellow began to talk, but it seems as if I could smell it now."

"We want Peter, the Wild Boy, and we must have him!" exclaimed Theo. "Get the banjo, Sallie. We'll try it on."

"But what are you going to do?"

"Play for Peter. Music always seems to stir him up. I played him out of that shaft before and I'll do it again. Anyway, the least we can do is to try."

Sallie went into the house and soon came out with the banjo. Theo saw the change in her face at once.

"Hello! You are scared now, Sallie!" he exclaimed. "What's up?"

"It's no imagination, Theo. There is a peculiar smell in the air."

"I was sure of it, but what makes you so sure?"

"Mrs. Carberry just complained of it. She knows nothing of what we have heard."

"You are right. If she complains it must be so. Ham, how long would it take you to get down in sight of that hot spring? Would you dare go with that fellow hanging around?"

"I must," replied Ham. "Some one ought to go, and I'm the one to do it. I think I can be back inside of half an hour. You bet I'm not going close up to it, but I can go near enough to see whether it is in action or not."

"Go!" said Theo. "And we will try for Peter, the Wild Boy. Sallie, you must explain to Mrs. Carberry. It has got to be done. After you have got her quiet you can come down to the shaft. You will find me playing there."

Ham had already started, and Theo, taking the banjo, walked over to the shaft and, seating himself on a stool near the windlass, began to play.

He was dreadfully worried—more so than words can express.

The queer smell had greatly increased.

There was something suffocating about the atmosphere. Perhaps it was imagination, but Theo felt as though he could hardly breathe, and yet the sky was clear and the sun shining brightly.

Theo remarked, however, that not a bird was now to be seen.



although in the early morning there had been any number of them. It certainly did look bad.

Theo had played half a dozen lively airs without result, before Sallie and Mrs. Carberry joined him.

"Here we are, Theo, and we are not going to make any fuss, either," exclaimed Sallie, cheerfully. "Any news of Peter yet?"

"None," replied Theo. "You can smell it now all right."

"Of course I can."

"And you, Mrs. Carberry?"

"I smelled it in the house," replied Mrs. Carberry. "Don't worry, Theo. We can't die but once, and if our time has come, why, we can't help it."

"Good for you!" cried Theo. "Now then, Sallie, lend us your voice and we will try it again."

And they did for the best part of half an hour. Theo played for all he was worth and Sallie sang till she was hoarse.

Not a word had been said about the smell since Sallie began to sing, but it was growing worse and worse every moment. Twice Mrs. Carberry had been seized with a violent fit of coughing, while Theo and Sallie were so oppressed that they could hardly breathe.

"It's no use! We can't raise him," said Theo, at last. "Oh, Sallie, I wish Ham would come back!"

"And don't I!" sighed Sallie. "Theo, it is just as that man said. He knew! He has gone out of the valley himself and has left us here to die."

"Hark!" exclaimed Mrs. Carberry. "I thought I heard a noise down in the shaft."

"Sing, Sallie! Sing!" cried Theo, who caught the sound.

The noise was soon heard again. It was just as though some one was shuffling over stones.

Theo played vigorously and Sallie sang for all she was worth.

Peter had come up out of this shaft once, and there was no reason why he should not come again.

Theo felt sure that there must be a drift down here, which very likely had its secrets as well as the one in the mine on top of the "Mountains of the Moon."

"Is he coming?" whispered Mrs. Carberry.

"Some one is coming," said Theo. "We shall know in a moment now."

He had no more than spoken when hurried footsteps were heard outside the shaft-house, and before any one could make a move Ham came tumbling in, as white as sheet.

"We are lost! We are lost!" he gasped. "The geyser is spurting up water a hundred feet high, and the whole valley is filling up with gas! Oh, my head! My head! It's bursting! I——"

Suddenly poor Ham threw out his hands, stumbled forward, and fell flat on his face at the mouth of the shaft.

"Oh! Oh! He's dead!" screamed Mrs. Carberry.

Theo dropped the banjo and sprang to the assistance of his friend.

"He has inhaled the deadly gas," he said, hoarsely. "It is what killed all those miners and made all those skeletons! Oh, Sallie! Are we to meet with the same fate?"

"A-yow! A-yow! A-yow!"

At the same instant the cry of Peter, the Wild Boy, rang out down in the shaft.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THEO GIVES UP AT LAST.

"A-yow! A-yow! A-yow!"

Playing for Peter has been a success.

The Wild Boy had proved himself friendly as usual.

He was undoubtedly at the bottom of the shaft.

"Speak to him, Sallie," panted Theo. "Call to him! It can't be me he is doing this for, it is you."

"Is Ham dead?" whispered Sallie, in a constrained voice.

"Don't know! Quick! Oh, do be quick! He may go away again!"

Sallie leaned over the edge of the shaft. She could just make out the Wild Boy's head far below.

"Peter! Peter!" she called gently. "Help us, Peter. Good Peter! Tell us what to do!"

Peter thrust out his hand and tried to seize the windlass rope.

He missed it, but he tried again and caught it, and the next Sallie knew he was coming up the rope like a monkey.

"Leave him to me! He's coming!" whispered Sallie. "Don't anybody say a word."

"Ham isn't coming to a bit," said Theo. "I'm afraid he is gone. No, he isn't, either. He breathes! But, oh, it is so little. Poor Ham! Why did I send him down there! Why didn't I go myself!"

"I can't stand it much longer myself," panted Mrs. Carberry. "My head is spinning like a top. I feel so oppressed that I can scarcely breathe."

She need not have mentioned it. Theo and Sallie were in precisely the same fix.

When Theo raised up he staggered so that he would have stumbled into the shaft if Sallie had not pushed him back.

The air was now filled with the deadly gas, and the stench was intolerable.

Slowly but surely it was spreading itself throughout the valley, and there was not a breath of wind to raise it up and blow it away.

"A-yow! A-yow! A-yow!"

Uttering his shrill cry, Peter, the Wild Boy, sprang out of the shaft and stood among them on the deck, blinking wildly, and looking as much frightened as any of them.

He muttered some unintelligible words, waved his hands about, pointed to his nose and mouth, and then to his head.

Then he began to cough and choke; then suddenly closing his eyes he half fell backward, all in expressive pantomime, which could scarcely have been plainer if he had spoken in words.

"I understand, Peter. We understand," said Sallie. "Help us, Peter. We will do just as you say."



Peter pointed out toward the elevator and made motions like a man pulling on a rope, and then slowly shook his head.

"He means the elevator won't work," gasped Theo.

Without paying any attention to him, Peter pointed down into the shaft, then pointed to himself, then made motions as if running, then began the hoisting motion again, and then seized the windlass and began violently winding up the rope.

"We have got to go down, Sallie," whispered Theo. "There is a drift here, too. It is the only way out."

"Hush!" breathed Sallie. "Don't say a word! Let him do just whatever he pleases."

Peter evidently did not need to be told what to do. He pulled away until the tub came up, and fastened it by means of the ratchet, and then pointed to Sallie, as much as to say: "You first."

"I ought to go first," said Theo, "but, oh, Sallie! I do hate to leave you here!"

"I must go," said Sallie. "We can't interfere with his plan." Then she added: "That's all right, Peter. I'll go."

But Peter did not want it just that way.

He took hold of Theo's hand and laid it on the windlass. Then he sprang into the tub and motioned for Theo to let him down.

"Can you do it, Theo?" asked Sallie. "I seem to be standing it better than you."

"I'm better now," replied Theo. "So is Ham. See, he breathes more naturally already. Go on, Peter! I understand. There has got to be some one in the drift to pull the tub in."

Peter nodded and seemed to understand. He now produced a bit of small rope and, tying it to the tub, motioned to Theo to lower away, which was done. The rope ran out about seventy feet, and then was violently agitated.

Theo stopped and could feel the tub swing out to the left. In an instant it was lightened, and the rope agitated again.

With all possible speed, Theo wound up the tub. Sallie got in and was lowered down. Looking over the edge of the black hole, Theo could see the tub drawn in by the small rope toward the left wall, and Peter helping Sallie to get out.

By the time Theo got the tub up again, and Mrs. Carberry stepped in, the good woman was almost past speech, and as for poor Theo himself, he was panting so that he began to wonder whether he should be able to keep his senses long enough to let Ham down.

His fears were groundless, however, and Ham was safely lowered.

Theo saw Peter lift him out and drag him into the drift.

Then he drew away and sat down upon the stool, panting terribly. He knew that he could no more let himself down by the rope than he could fly.

"This is my finish," thought the brave boy. "I've turned my responsibilities over to Peter, the Wild Boy. Heaven help them! I can't!"

His head was spinning around terribly, and the horrible stench of the gas almost turned his stomach.

Theo covered his face with his hands and gave up. He had

not life enough left to even make an effort to save himself. His senses were rapidly leaving him, when all at once the cry of the Wild Boy rang out, loud and shrill.

Theo was too far gone to be aroused by it, however.

His head fell forward upon his breast. He slipped off the stool and lay there at the top of the shaft like one dead.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### AN ENEMY IN THE DARK.

The next thing Theo knew he was lying on the rocks with his friends all standing beside him.

It was light and cool, and the air blew fresh about his head.

He straightened up and stared about, like a person awakening out of a long sleep.

There was Sallie and Mrs. Carberry and Ham, too, all alive and well, but Peter, the Wild Boy, was nowhere to be seen.

"Hello! What has been the matter with me!" gasped Theo. "Did I collapse? Where are we, anyhow? Where is Peter? What does it all mean? Hello, Ham! Are you all right again?"

"Right as the mail!" replied Ham, briskly. "This fresh air fixed me, and it has fixed you, too, Theo. If we had been left back in the shaft, I believe we would have both been dead by this time."

"Peter's work?"

"Every bit of it! We owe our lives to the Wild Boy, Theo, but we are not saved yet."

"No! What is this place?"

"It's the end of the drift. We are right behind the boarding-house, just the mountain between us; and look here! Another mystery."

Then Theo saw the mouth of a natural cave open behind him, leading in under the ledge, and beyond was the entrance to the drift through which they had come.

He staggered to his feet and rubbed his eyes.

"What mystery?" he asked.

"Why," said Sallie, "Ham declares that the cave there must extend under the boarding-house, but I suppose you want to know all particulars, Theo. If the gas affected you at all as it did Ham, I suppose you have been entirely unconscious, so we have got to bring you up to date."

"That's what it is," replied Theo. "Where is Peter? I suppose he saved my life. What in the world we would have done without him, Sallie, I don't know."

"Well, I do, then," replied Sallie. "We should all have been dead, just as sure as fate. Yes, Peter saved you, Theo. He went right up the rope, hand-over-hand, put you in the tub and lowered you down. Then he came down by the rope himself."

"Blessed Peter!" murmured Theo. "We have got a long account to settle with him."



"Indeed, you may well say so. When he got you down he picked up Ham and carried him through the drift right out here, no great distance, either, only about two hundred feet I should say. Mrs. Carberry followed him, and I stayed here with you. He was back in a few moments and took you out the same way. By the time we reached here the fresh air had revived Ham, and it has taken you only ten minutes to come to life again, so here we all are hemmed in by the rocks, ~~safe~~ as ever you see, but apparently safe from that horrible gas."

Theo shook himself and stared around.

They stood in a deep, natural depression, surrounded by towering rocks on all sides, the only exits being through the openings behind them.

"Where is Peter now?" asked Theo. "Is he going to show us the way out of here?"

"Can't tell you," replied Sallie. "He made signs for us to stay where we were, and he made us understand that the boarding-house at the mine can be reached through the cave; then he darted into it and was gone. My idea is that he suspects that fellow, Jack Meadows, may be hiding inside there, and has gone to see. Perhaps I'm mistaken, Theo, but that's what I think."

"Oh, I guess it's so, all right," said Ham, "and now, Theo, don't you want to know what I saw down at the geyser? I tell you it was a wonderful sight. The water went up in one great burst at least two hundred feet high, arched over, and dropped down again. Of course, I didn't get very near, for the smell of the gas was something dreadful. I thought I could stand it at first, but I soon found it was getting the best of me and I ran for all I was worth, and just had strength enough to get to the shaft-house when—but you know the rest."

"Did you see anything of Jack Meadows?" asked Theo.

"Not a thing. I believe now, that he had been down to the geyser and knew all about it."

"And made his escape by the shaft," added Sallie. "That's my idea."

"If that's the case we shall be pretty sure to see more of him," Theo was just saying, when all at once every one was startled by once more hearing the boom of the big bass-drum.

"Peter!" cried Sallie.

"That's what," said Ham, "and here he comes!"

Boom! Boom! went the drum, and then the cymbals clashed and bells began to ring, and out of the cave came Peter with the drum strapped upon his back, and the cymbals fastened on top; there was a cap of bells on his head, and in his hand he held a set of "pan pipes," which he blew upon furiously.

He seemed to be having a first-rate time all to himself, but the din was awful.

Never stopping, Peter began to climb the rocks and motioned to the others to follow him.

The drum was connected by a strap with his foot, and as he ran he kept up a constant banging. Evidently it was the outfit of one of those musical monstrosities occasionally seen in our city streets, some years ago, though wherever it came from Theo and his friends could only guess.

"We must follow him!" cried Sallie. "Peter knows what he is about. He is only leading the way."

This was evidently the Wild Boy's idea, for he turned around and beckoned to them to come on up over the rocks.

At first Mrs. Carberry declared that she could never do it, but by pushing and pulling, the boys managed to get her up onto the next level, which was about fifty feet above them, and there made a discovery which gave them all hope.

There was a narrow break in the mountain wall; a true canyon, but only about six feet wide.

Through this Peter, the Wild Boy, was running on, beating his drum, clanging the cymbals and blowing the pan pipes, rousing the echoes from the rocks around, and making a deafening din; when all at once, after they had followed him several hundred yards, the canyon ended against a wall of rock, with only a narrow opening close down by the ground into which Peter darted suddenly and disappeared.

"Another cave!" cried Theo, "but it's the way out, all right, you may depend."

"We must follow on," said Sallie. "I'll trust Peter any time. What a queer place, Theo. Look at this iron hook set in the wall. This must be more of Dade Fuller's work."

Theo stooped down and passed in under the rocks, followed by Sallie and Mrs. Carberry, Ham coming last, and he had scarcely passed in under the rocks when there was a loud cling of iron behind him and in the same instant a shot rang out ahead.

"A-yow! A-yow! A-yow!"

It was the cry of Peter, the Wild Boy, and the mad music suddenly ceased.

"Come on, you folks!" cried a loud voice out of the darkness! Come on and get your dose. You are prisoners under the 'Mountains of the Moon,' and nothing can save you now!"

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### CONCLUSION.

"Jack Meadows! He has shot the Wild Boy!" Theo exclaimed, in dismay.

"Yes, that's who I am, and I have shot the Wild Boy!" came the answer out of the darkness. "I did it, and I'm glad of it. Perhaps I'm looney! They kept me locked up in the asylum down to Cheyenne for years. Well, I got away finally and I worked my way up here. 'Cause why? I'm the only man in the world, what knows the secret of Dade Fuller's mine, and I want you to understand that I don't intend anybody shall share it with me. Ha! ha! ha!"

"The man is mad!" gasped Mrs. Carberry. "Oh, we shall all be killed!"

"Ham," whispered Theo, "what is it that shut behind us. I hear you fumbling around there. Tell us the worst, old man."



"It's a big iron gate, right across the passage," replied Ham, who had stepped back to see. "It's as firm as a rock. We can't get out. There's nothing left but to go ahead."

"And that means a go-ahead to our death, with that fiend in front of us," gasped Theo. "But listen, he is speaking again."

"You'll never escape!" called Jack Meadows' voice. "I could come in and kill you all if I wanted to, but it will be better to leave you to starve to death. You will find out what I mean in a moment. You can't escape, and that being the case, let me tell you a few secrets. I killed Dade Fuller. We escaped together on the day the gas filled the valley. I shot him on the trail, and now I've shot his son. That's Peter, the Wild Boy, ladies and gents. He's the baby Dade Fuller left behind him; how he has lived all these years I don't know, but when you have starved to death here on what we used to call the lower trail, there will be no one on earth who knows the secret of the mine but me!"

Clang!

The sound of iron banging against the rocks was heard again, this time ahead of them, and Jack Meadows' voice ceased to be heard.

Theo hastily lighted the lantern and started ahead.

"We are fenced in between two iron gates," he said, grimly. "Never mind, he has gone, anyhow, and that is something. Come on, or stay behind, just as you like, Sallie. I don't believe that madman means to shoot us now."

They pushed on in silence. Before they had gone a dozen yards they saw the iron gate ahead of them, cutting off further progress, and there in front of it lay the Wild Boy in a pool of blood, with the big drum still strapped to his back.

At the same instant loud shouts were heard beyond the gate, and then several shots were fired.

"Hooray! We have got him!" cried a voice, and five men dragging Jack Meadows with them came crowding around the gate.

"Jack Ramsey! Sheriff Twaits!" gasped Theo. "Thank heaven, we are saved!"

And so they were, but if it had not been for the fortunate coming of these men there is no telling what the end might have been.

Jack Ramsey was the porter at Black Top Hall, and Sheriff Twaits was well known to both the boys, having been a frequent visitor at the hotel that spring.

Afterward, Theo knew that Jack Meadows was not only a lunatic but a desperate criminal, and that the sheriff had been in search of him for a week.

He was captured now and stood among them, wounded and trembling with fear, so it was not difficult to make him tell the secret of the iron gate, and our friends were set free to find themselves immediately behind the hut where they had taken refuge during the thunderstorm, and had seen the Wild Boy dancing on the roof.

Of course, all trouble ended then and there.

Jack Meadows was taken down to Bellevue by the sheriff, and later on returned to the asylum. Theo and his party returned to Black Top Hall, taking poor Peter with them, for

Jack Ramsey had a wagon, and the road over Forty Rod Pass had been so repaired that they could drive to Black Top Hall.

Jack Ramsey had been out searching for the missing ones, ever since the night of the storm.

Weeks passed and Black Top Hall was filled to overflowing with summer guests.

During all these weeks Peter, the Wild Boy, lingered between life and death, but at last he conquered, and by fall was entirely well.

He clung to Theo like some faithful dog, and little by little began to talk intelligently.

A year later he could not only speak freely, but read a little.

He still lives at Black Top Hall, for Theo is still clerk there, but he seems to have reached the limit of his intelligence, and will certainly never be very bright in anything but music, for which he shows a good deal of talent.

But Peter is no poverty-stricken wail. He is rich. The book which Theo found on Dade Fuller's skeleton proved the Wild Boy's claim to the hidden mines and a large tract of land in the "Mountains of the Moon" adjoining General Slocum's estate.

The general has had himself appointed Peter's guardian, and is now working the lower mine, which pays handsomely. At the upper mine the horses were found drowned in their stalls; the place is too inaccessible to be profitably worked.

The geyser in the valley is no longer dangerous, for the new company which has taken charge has rigged up an enormous standpipe which carries the gas sufficiently high to have it blown away.

Theo and Ham often go in there to see how matters are progressing, sometimes over the mountains and sometimes by the lower trail through the iron gates.

Next year there is to be a change in Theo's fortune. He will marry Sallie Slocum, and become partner in the hotel, where Mrs. Carberry has taken up her permanent residence, as the climate agrees with her.

Probably Theo and Sallie will only remain there summers, as usual, but Ham stays among the "Mountains of the Moon" the year round, having for company during the dreary winter months young Master Fuller, whose fortune is rapidly approaching a million, but who is still known to all the guests of Black Top Hall as Peter, the Wild Boy.

Next week's issue will contain "GOVERNOR GUS; OR, THE WAR ON NO MAN'S LAND." By Allan Draper.

## SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

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## SOME CHASES AFTER MONSTER WHALES.

By Alexander Armstrong.

There is an abundance of authority for the statement that American whalers held first place in the catch of that big game animal. The Yankee whalers, during the palmy days of the oil trade, covered more seas, took more risks and barreled more oil than the men of any other nation. Indeed, the English were our only rivals, and they were satisfied with second place. France, Spain, Germany, Russia and some other countries sent out their whaling ships after oil, but very few of them ever made a profitable cruise. Their men lacked nerve to fight a big whale. I have, on several occasions, seen them cut loose from a whale because he ran to windward and put a little extra energy into the swish of his flukes. Under the same circumstances a Yankee crew would have produced their pipes for a smoke.

One of the many curious things about whaling was the identification of whales. To a green hand on his first voyage all whales of the same species look alike. After he becomes a closer observer he finds it just as easy to identify a whale he has seen before as it is for a farmer to identify a hog. It was in this way that Mocha Dick, Brazilian Pete, Spotted Jack and other famous whales were kept track of and reported.

Every sea has its celebrity. Off the coast of California and between Monterey Bay and Point Conception, a big bull whale known as Jack Pot had his pasture ground for eight or ten years before he came to grief. Every Pacific whaler had his description down so fine that he could be identified a mile away. A New Bedford ship in which I was boat steerer for a voyage lasting twenty-seven months, lost seven boats, twelve harpoons, two miles of line and five men by this whale, this loss covering three attacks. We were beating out of Santa Barbara Bay one day in the fifties, when we espied an English whaling brig creeping in. She was making a great deal of water, but hailed us for a surgeon. I was the doctor of our ship, and went aboard to answer the call.

"Great snakes! but we've been nearly done for!" exclaimed the captain, as I stepped over the rail. "I've had four men killed, and there are now five others with broken bones for you to take care of."

"Fall in with a pirate?"

"A great sight worse, sir. Day before yesterday we fell in with the biggest whale I ever tackled, and not content with smashing three boats and using up so many of my men, he came head on for the brig and gave her a knock as if she had struck a rock."

While I was patching up the men he gave me further particulars. The whale was old Jack Pot, then in the fourth year of his glory. This whale was always identified by a great white scar on his nose and by the way he carried his head out of water. He lifted it higher than any other whale I ever saw. Up to the time the Englishman got hold of him he had received a dozen harpoons and smashed nearly as many boats, and had never run a rod

from anybody. As soon as hit he would turn and fight, and he used his great under jaw so viciously that the bravest men hastened to get out of the way.

When our ship made sail again we stood out to sea to look for Jack Pot. About sixty miles off the coast we picked up a boat belonging to the California schooner White Wave, and here was more of Jack Pot's work. The schooner was whaling on a small scale and had that morning sighted old Jack Pot. A boat was lowered and the whale coolly waited for it to come up. Just as the boat had come within throwing distance Jack Pot sank out of sight, and two minutes later came up near the boat, knocked it to pieces with one blow of his flukes, and not a man escaped death. A second boat had just been lowered when he started for the schooner, which was broadside. With head well up and flukes churning the waters to foam Jack Pot drove straight for the schooner, struck her fair amidships and she settled away and went down right in front of his nose. Her crew went over the other side into the boat and had not pulled a dozen strokes before the schooner's hull was under water.

The whale probably crushed a large section of the broadside, and the collision no doubt stunned him for the moment, as he lay like a log on the surface and let the boat escape.

On a straight line drawn from Juan Fernandez Island to Callao, Peru, whaling ships were almost certain to fall in with Sly Tom, an old bull that had a career of seven or eight years. If not found north or south he was sure to be met with near the Tropic of Capricorn.

When he had been known for four years I planted two irons in him, and these were all he ever got until a Nantucket crew gathered him in. Sly Tom deserved his name. The first time he was ever seen he rose alongside an English whaler which was lying to in the night, and so softly did he break water that his presence alongside was not suspected until the rank odor exhaled betrayed him. Then, just as a harpoon was about to be thrown, he settled away like a stone, and those who had not seen him would not credit the statement that he had been alongside.

Two weeks later an Englishman lowered for him. Sly Tom was all alone, and he waited until the harpooner stood up to throw, and then settled away. He disappeared like a cannon ball thrown overboard, and twenty minutes later he rose to the surface a mile to windward so softly that scarce a ripple was created. When the boat pulled up to him he went down as before, and after playing hide-and-seek for half a day the chase was given up in disgust.

A year later my ship found him about a hundred miles north of Capricorn. We had a light breeze and a smooth sea, and we found him floating on the surface. We lowered to leeward of him, crept softly up with the paddles, and from the fact that I got two irons into him I believe he must have been sound asleep.

As the second iron went in he lifted his massive flukes on high until he stood on his head, and down he went as softly and silently as a greased stick.

He took out our lines without a slack, used up those we bent on, and he must have had a full mile of rope between him and the boat when we had to cut to save ourselves. We did not see him again.



The mate of the *Fanny Carew*, a New Bedford whaler, who had his boat smashed by Mocha Dick near the end of the career of that big brute, counted twenty-two excrescences on the body while floating beside it on an oar.

Each one of these represented a harpoon, but the total number by no means represented all the irons flung into it.

Mocha Dick was a fighter from way back, and was never seen in company with any other whale. Some captains put him down as good for 140 barrels of oil, and no one estimated him under 100. His length was given at 75 feet at the lowest and 90 at the highest.

One morning about nine o'clock, while we were approaching the Java coast from western Australia, and while yet fifty miles away, we came up with the Scotch whaling ship *Hornpipe*. She was cruising on whaling ground and under easy sail, and as we came within three miles of her she lowered two boats for a whale.

It was Mocha Dick, and although he was fully identified, and the captain knew his reputation, he knew us to be a Yankee ship and he did not care to show the white feather in our presence.

The whale was to leeward of the ship, and anything but a fighter would have gone out of sight before the boats were half way to him.

Mocha Dick waited.

We shortened sail so as not to be in the way, and then most of our crew took to the rigging to see the fun.

The boats went down to him under sail, but he did not wait for them to open the fight.

When the nearest was two cables' length away he slewed around and went for her head on.

It was like a freight train rushing down grade upon a child. The men kept their nerve wonderfully well, and put forth every effort to dodge him, but as he came up the old fighter swung his under jaw to the right, brought it back to left like a boxer's uppercut, and the boat and its crew flew into the air.

The second boat sheered off and the whale stewed around and started for it, swishing its flukes until he raised waves six feet high.

He struck the boat full on the broadside, and passed right over her and ran off about a mile and came to a stop.

A third boat from the Scotchman, assisted by one from our ship, rescued four men out of the two crews, and one of these had a broken arm.

Not another soul escaped.

The captain of the *Hornpipe* then surrendered his right to us, and we lowered two boats to close in with the fighter.

Our ship had tacked him two years before and lost two boats and three men, and we now approached with great caution.

Dick lay head on to us, lashing the sea and sweeping his jaw; but while we were manœvering to get an advantage he turned tail and went down, and we saw him no more.

It was six weeks later when we heard of him again. We were then 150 miles to the west of the Straits of Sunda, and one afternoon we picked up six Japanese sailors on a raft, and in the last stages of exhaustion.

Five days before, when off Lone Island, as the English have named the first island, after passing through the straits to the west, and sailing before a fair wind in a coasting craft, a whale broke water about half a mile away, and, without waiting to be invited, came straight down upon them and gave their craft such a blow as waterlogged her in two minutes.

The description left no doubt of the fact that it was Mocha Dick.

The crew had just time enough to knock a raft together and get away, when their craft went down until her rails were awash.

Two months later, while we were cruising along the coast at Tasman Land, we had a narrow squeak with Mocha Dick. One evening, just between sunset and dark, he suddenly broke water dead ahead of us over a mile away. We had a good working breeze, and the sea was covered with whitecaps, which two facts probably saved us. The man in the crow's nest saw the whale as he breached, but had scarcely announced the fact before he screamed:

"Heaven save us! He's coming for the ship head on!"

Our discipline was as good as any ship outside the navy, but the announcement threw us into confusion from fore-castle to cabin. Every man jumped to the conclusion that it was Mocha Dick, and to add to our confusion the man left the crow's nest and came hurrying down with exclamations of terror. By the captain's orders the ship was allowed to fall off her course and the order came none too soon. We heard a great rush, like the swash made by a line-of-battle ship under full sail, caught sight of a wall of foam and a great black object in the center of it, and the next moment the whale passed astern of us so close I could have tossed my hat aboard of him. There was no doubt he meant to attack us, and no one felt easy until the lapse of an hour gave us every reason to believe that he had given up his whim.

Half a dozen ships claim the honor of finishing off Mocha Dick, but I have reason to doubt that any of them were in at the death. A year after the old fighter had ceased to be heard from, and when it was supposed that he had taken his leave from that sea, I met a Javanese captain at Surabaya who told me that about four months previously he had come across Old Dick floating dead on the surface opposite the sandalwood island of Sumla, which is well up in the northern arm of the Indian Ocean. The dead whale was not over twenty-five miles from the island, and as the weather was fine, a boat was lowered to inspect him. Counting the excrescences in sight, the captain figured out that he had been harpooned twenty-seven times, and he had then sticking in his hump an English harpoon branded with the date of that year. It had not reached a vital part, but old Dick probably died of some ailment brought on by having so many cold irons darted into his body. The English harpoon was cut out, and the captain had it to verify his story. Later on I heard that the carcass of a whale bearing dozens of scars had drifted ashore on the island of Timor, at the entrance of the Aratura Sea, and I have no doubt that this was the ignoble end of a whale once talked about by thousands and known to hundreds of seamen.



## GIANT SAW PUZZLE.

This puzzle contains twenty-one pieces of wood nicely finished; take them apart and put them together same as illustrated. Everybody would like to try it, as it is very fascinating. Price, by mail, postpaid, 25c. each.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

## DELUSION TRICK.

A magic little box in three parts that is very mystifying to those not in the trick. A coin placed on a piece of paper disappears by dropping a nickel ring around it from the magic box. Made of hard wood two inches in diameter. Price, 12c.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

## ITCH POWDER.

Gee whiz! What fun you can have with this stuff. Moisten the tip of your finger, tap it on the contents of the box, and a little bit will stick. Then shake hands with your friend, or drop a speck down his back. In a minute he will feel as if he had the seven years' itch. It will make him scratch, roar, squirm and make faces. But it is perfectly harmless, as it is made from the seeds of wild roses. The horrible itch stops in a few minutes, or can be checked immediately by rubbing the spot with a wet cloth. While it is working, you will be apt to laugh your suspender buttons off. The best joke of all. Price 10 cents a box, by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

## COMICAL RUBBER STAMPS.

A complete set of five grotesque little people made of indestructible rubber mounted on black walnut blocks. The figures consist of Policeman, Chinaman, and other laughable figures as shown in pictures. As each figure is mounted on a separate block, any boy can set up a regular parade or circus by printing the figures in different positions. With each set of figures we send a bottle of colored ink, an ink pad and full instructions. Children can stamp these pictures on their toys, picture books, writing paper and envelopes, and they are without doubt the most amusing and entertaining novelty going up in years. Price of the complete set of Rubber Stamps, with ink and ink pad, only 10c., 3 sets for 25c., one dozen 90c., by mail postpaid.

L. Senarens, 347 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

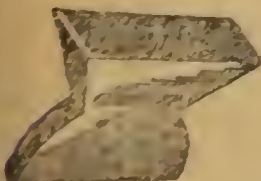
## JUMPING TELESCOPE.



This is an oblong tube in exact imitation of a telescope. By looking through it, reveals one highly magnified picture of a dancer or other subject. It contains on the side a button, which the victim is told to press for a change of picture. Instead of another picture appearing, the entire inside part shoots out, as shown in illustration. It is entirely harmless, but gives the victim a genuine scare.

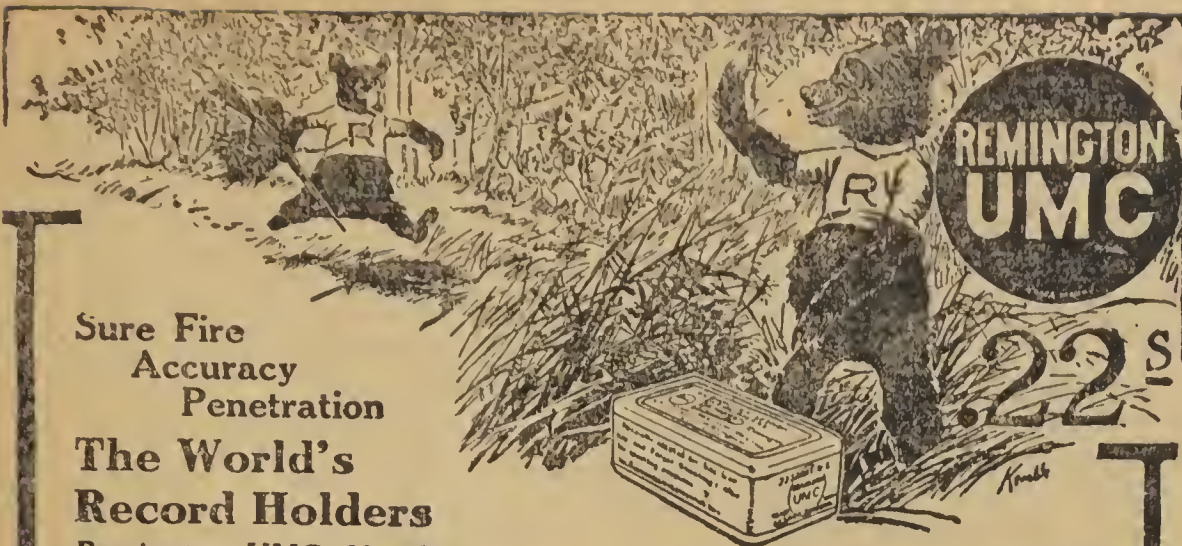
Price, 15c. each; 2 for 25c. by mail, postpaid. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

## THE FLUTOPHONE.



A new musical instrument, producing the sweetest dulcet tones of the flute. The upper part of the instrument is placed in the mouth, the lips covering the openings in the centre. Then by blowing gently upon it you can play upon it as easily as whistling. But this practice is required to become a finished player. It is made entirely of metal, and will last a lifetime. We send full instructions with each instrument. Price, 15c., or 2 for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

A. A. WATFORD, 16 Hart St., Brooklyn, N. Y.



Sure Fire  
Accuracy  
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Remington-UMC .22 cal.  
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299 Broadway New York City

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Without exception, the most beautiful and interesting things on the market. They consist of a dozen dried-up sprigs, neatly encased in handsomely decorated envelopes, just as they are imported from Japan. Place one sprig in a bowl of water, and it begins to exude

various bright tints. Then it slowly opens out into various shapes of exquisite flowers. They are of all colors of the rainbow. It is very amusing to watch them take form.

Small size, price 5 cents; large size, 10 cents a package, by mail, postpaid.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

## JAPANESE TRICK KNIFE.



You can show the knife and instantly draw it across your finger, apparently cutting deep into the flesh. The red blood appears on the blade of the knife, giving a startling effect to the spectators. The knife is removed and the finger is found in good condition. Quite an effective illusion.

Price 10c. each by mail. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

## SEE-SAW PUZZLE.



The most absorbing puzzle seen for years. The kind you sit up half the night to do. The puzzle is to get both balls, one in each pocket.

Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid. M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

## SURPRISE KINEMATOGRAPH.



The greatest hit of the season! It consists of a small metal, nickel-plated tube, with a lens eye view, which shows a pretty ballet girl in tights. Hand it to a friend, who will be delighted with the first picture; tell him to turn the screw in center of instrument to change the views, when a stream of water squirts into his face, much to his disgust. Anyone who has not seen this kinematograph in operation is sure to be caught every time. The instrument can be refilled with water in an instant, ready for the next customer.

Price 25c. by mail, postpaid. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

## TRICK FAN.



A lady's fan made of colored silk cloth. The fan may be used and then shut, and when it opens again, it falls in pieces; shut and open again and it is perfect, without a sign of a break. A great surprise for those not in the trick. Price, 35c. by mail, postpaid.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

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The Remington-UMC cube make a fine



## FALSE MUSTACHES, BEARDS, ETC.

Mustaches 15c. each, 2 for 25c.; full beards and side whiskers, 75c. each. Can be had in five colors—gray, red, dark brown, light brown and black. Name Color you want. Address CHAS. UNGER, Dept 5, 316 Union Street, Jersey City, N. J.

## LOTS OF FUN FOR A DIME

Ventriloquists Double Throat. Plus roof of mouth; always invincible; greatest thing yet. Astonish and mystify your friends. Nod like a horse; whine like a puppy; sing like a canary and imitate birds and beasts of field and forest. LOADS OF FUN. Wonderful invention. Thousands sold. Price only 10 cents; 3 for 25 cents or 12 for 50 cents. DOUBLE THROAT CO. DEPT. K. FREIGHTOWN, N. J.



## MYSTERY, MAGIC AND FUN.

250 Jokes and Riddles, 73 Toasts, 67 Parlor Tricks, 8 Fortune Telling Secrets, 52 Money-Making Secrets, 22 Funny Readings. All 10c. Postpaid. CHAS. UNGER, 316 Union Street, Dept. 6, Jersey City, N. J.



## THE MAGIC DAGGER.

A WONDERFUL ILLUSION. You can stab a friend. Your friend is not injured in the least. It will startle all. Price 12c. each, or 3 for 35c. CHAS. UNGER, 316 Union St., Dept. 5, Jersey City, N. J.

## CACHOO'OR SNEEZING POWDER.



The greatest fun-maker of them all. A small amount of this powder, when blown in a room, will cause everyone to sneeze without anyone knowing where it comes from. It is very light, will float in the air for some time, and penetrate every nook and corner of a room. It is perfectly harmless. Cachoo is put up in bottles, and one bottle contains enough to be used from 10 to 15 times. Price, by mail, 10c. each; 3 for 25c. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



VANISHING AND RE-APPEARING EGG.—Very fine, easy to perform and it produces a marvelous and mystifying effect. Egg is made to appear and vanish right before the eyes. Beautifully made. Price, 25c.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

## RARE POSTAGE STAMPS.



Our packages are the best, as each contains at least 2 rare ones, worth the price of the whole lot. Start a collection. In time it will grow very valuable. Every known variety of foreign and domestic stamps in these packages. Fifty varieties for 5 cents; one hundred, 10 cents; two hundred, 20 cents; three hundred, 35 cents; five hundred, \$1.25; one thousand, \$3.25; two thousand, \$18.00; 1,000 mixed lot, 25 cents. All in good condition and worth twice the amount we ask.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

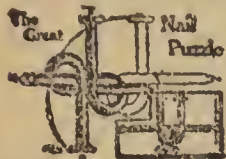




### GOOD LUCK BANKS.

Ornamental as well as useful. Made of highly nickel-plated brass. It holds just One Dollar. When filled it opens itself. Remains locked until refilled. Can be used as a watchcharm. Money refunded if not satisfied. Price, 10c. by mail.

L. Senarens, 347 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, N. Y.



### NAIL PUZZLE.

Made of 2 metal nails linked together. Keeps folks guessing; easy to take them apart when you know how. Directions with every one.

Price, 6c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### VANISHING CIGAR.



This cigar is made in exact imitation of a good one. It is held by a rubber cord which, with the attached safety pin, is fastened on the inside of the sleeve. When offered to a friend, as it is about to be taken, it will instantly disappear.

Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### GOOD LUCK PUZZLE.



It consists of three horseshoes fastened together. Only a very clever person can take off the closed horseshoe from the two linked horseshoes. But it can be done in a moment when the secret is known. Price, by mail, 16c. each.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

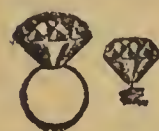
### ROUGH RIDER DISC PISTOLS.



Made of nicely colored wood 5 1/2 inches long. The power is furnished by rubber bands. Ten discs of cardboard with each pistol. Price, 6c. each, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### IMITATION GIANT DIAMONDS.



Diamond rings or studs of half-inch and one inch in diameter are heard of in stories only. We have them imitated by prodigious sparkling stones which will deceive the glance of any spectator. Price by mail, postpaid, small size, 25c. each; large size, 35c. each.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



### MAGIC PUZZLE KEYS.

Two keys interlocked in such a manner it seems impossible to separate them, but when learned it is easily done.

Price, 6c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### THE JUMPING FROG.



This little novelty creates a world of laughter. Its chief attractiveness is that it takes a few seconds before leaping high in the air, so that when set, very innocently along side of an unsuspecting person, he is suddenly startled by the wonderful activity of this frog. Price, 15c. each by mail postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### ALUMINUM DRINKING CUPS.



These handsome little cups are very handy in size, do not leak, and are satin finished. When compressed, can be carried in the vest pocket. They hold a good quantity of liquid, and are very strong, light, yet durable. Price, 14c. each, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### SURPRISE PERFUME BOTTLE.



Those in the joke may freely smell the perfume in the bottle, but the unlabeled, on removing the cork will receive the contents in his hands. This is a simple and clever joke.

Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### THE MAGIC CIGAR CASE.



A beautiful and perfect cigar case, made of imitation alligator and sealskin leather; worth a quarter as a cigar case alone. It can be shown full of cigars and instantly handed to a person, who, upon opening it, finds only an empty case. The box has a secret spring and a double case, and can be operated only by one in the secret. Full printed instructions sent with each case. Every smoker should have one. Price, 20c.; 2 for 35c. by mail, postpaid; one dozen by express, \$1.50.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

### NORWEGIAN MOUSE.

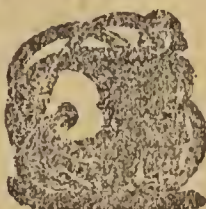


A very large gray mouse, measuring 8 inches from tip of nose to end of tail. The body of mouse is hollow. Place your first finger in his body, and then by moving your finger up and down, the mouse appears to be running up your sleeve. Enter a room where there are ladies, with the mouse running up your sleeve, and you will see a rapid scattering of the fair sex. Many practical jokes can be perpetrated with this small rodent.

Price, 16c.; 3 for 25c. mailed, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### A NEW SQUIRT BADGE.



Great fun for the million! Wear it in your buttonhole and then press the bulb and watch the other fellow run.

Price, 14c.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St. New York City.

### THE ELK HEAD PUZZLE.



Just out, and one of the most fascinating puzzles on the market. The stunt is to separate the antlers and rejoin them. It looks easy, but try it and you will admit that it is without exception the best puzzle you have ever seen. You can't leave it alone. Made of silvered metal.

Price, 12c.; 3 for 30c., sent by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### MARBLE VASE.



A clever and puzzling effect, easy to do; the apparatus can be minutely examined. Effect: A marble can be made to pass from the hand into the closed vase, which a moment before was shown empty. This is a beautiful enameled turned wood vase.

Price, 20c.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

### THE MAGNETIC TOP.



A handsome metal, highly magnetized toy. A horseshoe and a spiral wire furnished with each top. When spun next to the wires, they make the most surprising movements. You can make wires of different shapes and get the most peculiar effects. Price, 5c., postpaid.

L. Senarens, 347 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

### THE CROWN STYLO.

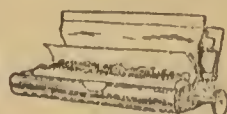


Made of aluminum, satin finish, guaranteed not to leak. This stylographic ink pen is made on a new plan. It cannot corrode and will outlast and outclass any similar pencil on the market. It is a splendid writer, and is easily kept in order. Each one packed with a filler, and a clip to hold it in your vest pocket.

Price, 25c. each, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### RAPID CIGARETTE MAKER.



This little article should be in the pocket of every smoker. With it a perfect cigarette can be made in ten seconds. You will find them equal in appearance and far superior in quality to commercial ones, at less than a quarter of the cost. With our cigarette maker in your possession, you can smoke a pipe or cigarette at pleasure, as it's just as easy to roll a cigarette as to fill a pipe. Every part of the cigarette maker is handsomely nickel-plated. Price, 15c., or 3 for 40c. by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### LINK THE LINK PUZZLE.



The sensation of the day. Pronounced by all, the most baffling and scientific novelty out. Thousands have worked at it for hours without mastering it, still it can be done in two seconds by giving the links the proper twist, but unless you know how, the harder you twist them the tighter they grow. Price, 6c.; 3 for 15c.; one dozen, 50c., by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

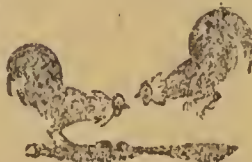
### WINDOW SMASHERS.



The greatest sensation, just from Paris. A most wonderful effect of a smashing, breaking, falling pane or glass. It will electrify everybody. When you come home, slam the door shut and at the same time throw the discs to the floor. Every pane of glass in the house will at once seem to have been shattered. Price, by mail, postpaid, 35c., a set of six plates.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### THE FIGHTING ROOSTERS.



A full blooded pair of fighting game cocks. These illiputian fighters have real feathers, yellow legs and fiery red combs, their movements when fighting are perfectly natural and lifelike, and the secret of their movements is known only to the operator, who can cause them to battle with each other as often and as long as desired. Independent of their fighting proclivities they make very pretty mantle ornaments. Price for the pair in a strong box, 10c.; 3 pairs for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### THE PEG JUMPER.



A very effective pocket trick, easily to be performed by any one. A miniature paddle is shown. Central holes are drilled through it. A wooden peg is inside of the upper hole. Showing now both sides of the paddle, the performer causes, by simply breathing upon it, the peg to leave the upper hole, and appear in the middle one. Then it jumps to the lower hole, back to the middle one, and lastly to the upper hole. Both sides of the paddle are repeatedly shown.

Price by mail, 15c.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

### DEAD SHOT SQUIRT PISTOL.



If you shoot a man with this "gun" he will be too mad to accept the ancient excuse—"I didn't know it was loaded." It loads easily with a full charge of water, and taking aim, press the rubber bulb at the butt of the pistol, when a small stream of water is squirted into his face. The best thing to do then is to pocket your gun and run. There are "loads of fun" in this wicked little joker, which looks like a real revolver, trigger, cock, chambers, barrel and all. Price only 7c.; 4 for 25c.; one dozen 60c. by mail postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### THE HIDEOUS SPIDER.



Fun for everybody with one of these handsome brutes. His body is 3 inches long, beautifully enameled green, with white ridges, yellow speckles, bulging eyes, and a big red mouth. He is armed with six legs and two upright feelers, made of flexible spiral springs. A dark, invisible thread attached to his body lets you shake him in the air before your friends' eyes, when the legs wiggle in a most natural, lifelike manner. Guaranteed to make any lady howl and to scare the bravest hero on earth out of his boots.

Price by mail, 10c. each.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### MINIATURE COMPASS CHARM.



A beautiful charm, to be worn on the watch chain. It consists of a true and perfect compass, to which is attached, by a pivot, a powerful magnifying glass. When not in use the magnifying glass fits closely inside the compass and is not seen. The compass is protected by a glass crystal, and is handsomely silver-nickel plated and burnished, presenting a very attractive appearance. Here you have a reliable compass, a powerful magnifying glass, and a handsome charm, all in one. It is a Parisian novelty, entirely new. Price, 25c. by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



# PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 25, 1912

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## BRIEF, BUT POINTED.

The winding of Big Ben, the clock in the British House of Parliament, is a tedious performance. The hour weight and the quarter weight have to be wound twice a week, the operation taking about five hours in each case. The weight for the quarter is just one ton and a half, and the hour weight is over a ton. The pendulum, thirteen and a half feet long, vibrates once in two seconds, and weighs nearly 700 pounds.

It has long been known that rats carry infectious diseases from one house to another. To enable him to study sanitary conditions in San Francisco, Dr. Blue proposes to use colored rats. He wants to know whether rats are migrating from one district to another, and, if so, how rapidly. So he has ordered a number of rats to be dyed red and liberated in one district, and green ones in another. When a toper sees these bright-hued rodents he will certainly believe he is suffering from the D. T.'s.

Dr. Francis H. Herriek says a sparrow will pluck a horsehair from the mouth of a nestling, while another bird, like an oriole, will stand by and see its mate hang until dead without attempting to release it. A robin will tug at a string which has caught on a limb, but is never seen fully to meet the situation by releasing the string. It will make several turns of a cord about a limb and leave the other end free without any relation to the nest, so that its effort is useless. It ties no knots. The gull, according to abundant and competent testimony, will carry shellfish to a considerable height, drop them on the rocks or hard ground, and repeat the experiment until it gets the soft meat.

In the southern part of the South African continent the zebra has never been domesticated with any great measure of success, the reason given being that they have either very bad or very good memories, and unless worked every day after being broken, become unmanageable again. In East Africa the case is quite different, and great expectations are based on the future development of the zebra as a servant of man. It is recognized that the pure-bred animal can never be successfully domesticated; he may be broken,

but he will remain an expensive luxury, or a somewhat dangerous toy. The system that is being followed in East Africa is to cross the zebra with a horse or a pony; the resulting hybrid possesses some of the characteristics of the mule, and is easily broken to work. A supply of young zebras in a wild state is fairly easy to obtain; they soon become tame, but are very difficult to rear. For the moment, thanks to the government measures for establishing big game preserves and for restricting the numbers of game animals that may be shot, the existence of the zebra in a wild state is safe; but, in common with all other kinds of hoofed game, he is bound to begin to disappear before the onward march of closer settlement, and there is already a strong demand in East Africa for the formation of zebra ranches.

## OUR COMIC COLUMN.

"Smoking again? I thought you'd cut it out." "Well, you see, when I've convinced myself that I can cut it out whenever I want, I start smoking again."

Irate Patron—I thought this railroad was for the benefit of the public. Railroad Official—You're away off. The public is for the benefit of the railroad.

"You say the man was chased by his enemies through several States. What state was he in when you saw him after their attack?" "I should say he was in a state of collapse."

"Why did the elopement fall through?" "We had a signal arranged. She told me to come to her window and make a noise like a robin. I did so." "Yes?" "Then her father popped out and made a noise like a shotgun."

Miss Aseum—When Mr. Richley saw my photograph he said it was very pretty, didn't he? Come, now, honest! Miss Chellus—No; quite the reverse. He said it was a good likeness.

"I want a good revolver," began the determined-looking man. "Yes, sir," said the salesman. "Six chambers?" "Why—er—you'd better make it a nine-chamber. I want to use it on a cat next door."

"Norah, didn't I tell you that I wanted a pitcher of ice-water the very first thing in the morning?" asked Mrs. Gunson. "Yis mum, ye did," replied the new maid, "an' to make sure thot ye'd git it th' first thing, I left it in front of th' dure last night."

The steamboat came splashing along her course at full speed, and the first thing the passengers knew had crashed head on into the pier. "Mersey!" cried a passenger, as the bow crashed and the splinters flew, "I wonder what is the matter?" "Nothin'," said Pat, one of the deckhands. "Nothin', ma'am—but it looks to me as if the captain just forgot that we shtop here."



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